

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 14, 2005

MLB, players adopt tougher steroid policy

Pact includes more frequent testing, penalty for first-time offenders

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A man on a mission

Iraqi trains for the skeleton, hopes to be first
from his country to compete in Winter Olympics

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AP
Iraqi Faissal Faisal, 24, makes a run down the track at the Verizon Sports Complex in Lake Placid, N.Y., during training on Wednesday. Faisal is working toward his goal of becoming the first Iraqi athlete to compete in the Winter Olympics. For the past week, Faisal has been working with U.S. coaches as he learns the sliding sport of skeleton.

Iraqi forces will lead vote security, Batiste says

BY LEO SHANE III

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — U.S. forces will play a behind-the-scenes role during the Iraqi elections later this month and Iraqi security forces will be the visible security presence at the polls, according to the U.S. commander of military forces in north central Iraq.

Army Maj. Gen. John Batiste said Thursday that he has seen great improvement in the Iraqi security forces over the last few months, and believes having them directly monitor voting — instead of U.S. troops —

U.S. to provide 'quick support as necessary'

will give more legitimacy to the election process.

"This is an election for Iraqis, by Iraqis," he said. "It's important this be an Iraqi-run election."

"You'll see Iraqi security forces at polling stations and around polling stations. They know exactly where polling stations are and have developed plans to secure them. We'll operate from a distance and provide quick support as necessary."

Batiste praised the Iraqi military and po-

lice units as courageous and diverse, saying that Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis are all represented in the forces.

He said threats and direct attacks on the forces have increased dramatically in the last few weeks, which he takes as a sign that the domestic soldiers are becoming more effective and more problematic for insurgents.

Army officials said since Oct. 1, Iraqi forces have killed about 200 insurgents and captured about 1,400 in operations

with U.S. military personnel and in independent missions.

"Leading up to the elections we expect [insurgents] to go after Iraqi security forces when they are in small numbers in small areas and to continue to attack us from a distance," Batiste said. "But there is no shortage of brave Iraqis who want to stand up for their country."

Batiste said he expects elections to take place throughout central Iraq, despite comments from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that this week calling parts of the country too unstable to take part.

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Gunmen kill aide to pro-election Iraqi cleric

BY SINAN SALAHEDDIN

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Gunmen killed a representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's most senior Shiite Muslim cleric, along with the aide's son and four bodyguards in a town south of Baghdad, an official in the cleric's office said Thursday.

Insurgents trying to derail Iraq's Jan. 30 elections appeared to be sending a message to al-Sistani, who strongly supports the vote.

Insurgents have targeted electoral workers and candidates.

Elsewhere, gunmen opened fire on a minibus picking up a Turkish businessman from the Bakhan Hotel in central Baghdad on Thursday, killing six Iraqis and kidnapping the Turk, who reportedly ran a construction company that worked with U.S.-led occupation authorities.

Sheik Mahmoud Firjan, al-Sistani's representative in the town of Salman Pak, 10 miles southeast of Baghdad, was shot dead Wednesday night as he was returning home from a mosque where he performed the evening prayers, the official said on condition of anonymity.

The aide's son and four bodyguards also were killed, the official said at al-Sistani's office in the Shiite holy city of Najaf.

Shiites make up 60 percent of Iraq's 26 million people and are expected to dominate the 275-member National Assembly in the first free elections held in Iraq since it became independent in 1932.

Some Sunnis, who are 20 per-



Iraqis have their morning tea Thursday next to electoral posters featuring the Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, in Baghdad. The elections planned for Jan. 30 are the first democratic elections in Iraq since the country was formed in 1932.

cent of the population, fear a loss of the dominance and privilege they enjoyed for decades. Sunni clerics have called for a boycott.

Al-Sistani has urged Iraqis to vote, calling it a religious duty for every man and woman. The cleric is not running himself but is backing the 228 candidates from the United Iraqi Alliance, a coalition of 16 groups that includes Iraq's largest Shiite political party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

If many Sunnis do boycott the vote, the United Iraqi Alliance stands to dominate the assembly, whose main job will be to write a permanent constitution.

Interim Prime Minister Ayad Alawi on Thursday reiterated that the Jan. 30 elections shouldn't be postponed despite some groups' concerns about security.

"There are calls for postponing for the sake of postponing and I don't think this helps Iraq," Alawi told Al-Arabiya television.

"One of the ways to end the insurgency is to continue going forward with the political process and that Iraqis participate in the political process, including elections," Alawi said.

Meanwhile, oil resumed flowing through a major pipeline linking Kirkuk's oil fields with the northern refinery of Beji following a three-week stoppage caused by a Dec. 23 sabotage attack, an official with the North Oil Co. said Thursday.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Wednesday, at least 1,356 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,068 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is one higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,218 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 959 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department:

■ No identifications reported.

U.S. concedes Jan. 30 election in Iraq may not run smoothly

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Administration officials say the Iraqi elections at the end of the month will be less than perfect, but nonetheless will pave the way for a drawdown of U.S. troops.

"The election is not going to be perfect," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said Wednesday. "This is the first time Iraqis will be able to freely choose their leaders. It's for a transitional government, and it's one of three elections that will take place over the course of this year."

Separately, Secretary of State Colin Powell said American troops will begin leaving

this year as the Iraqi army, national guard and police force take on a larger security role.

"But I cannot give you a timeline when they will all be home," Powell said in an interview with National Public Radio that was released by the State Department on Wednesday.

Powell has said it is imperative for the elections to go forward as planned to give more credence to the concept that insurgents are fighting an Iraqi government rather than an American occupation force.

The U.S. military's ground forces commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, has said that while most of Iraq's 18 provinces

are secure enough for the elections to proceed, security remains poor in four provinces. Those provinces — Nineveh, Anbar, Salahadin and Baghdad — are home to about 25 percent of Iraq's population.

McClellan said coalition forces and the Iraqi government are "working to address those ongoing security challenges."

"We want to make sure that there's as broad a participation as possible in those elections," he said. One idea being considered is to let people who are prevented from voting by violence to vote later.

White House officials said that while there has been little preparation for the vote in Anbar province and part of Nin-

evah province, there remains some hope that ballots can be distributed, voting lists drawn and polling places set up by Jan. 30.

One provision that may help overcome logistical challenges and encourage turnout in troubled provinces is to allow people in those parts of the country to vote anywhere they like, rather than only at a specified polling place, officials suggested.

In Iraq, 14 million of Iraq's 26 million people have so far registered to vote, according to the White House. There are 111 political parties and other entities competing for shares of representation in the 275-member National Assembly. The results of the Jan. 30 election are not to be announced until around Feb. 15.

Battalion takes on many duties in Afghanistan

BY KEVIN DOUGHERTY

Stars and Stripes

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan — They have become a rather indispensable lot, the soldiers of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regiment.

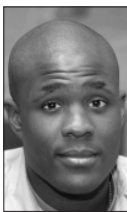
Like many Army units these days, this 25th Infantry Division unit has been working somewhat out of its "lane." The howitzers that the unit brought from Hawaii are still in their rightful places, but so much more has been asked of the soldiers who fire the guns or support their operation.

"We're all over the place," said Maj. David Flynn, the unit commander. "It's something definitely different from what I'm used to as an artillery guy."

In the months leading up to its deployment from Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu, the battalion was gearing up for what it does best, Flynn said. Then, late in the planning stages, the mission expanded to include infantry work and other duties.



Maj. David Flynn



Sgt. Hamzat Saba



Sgt. Frank Villa



Capt. Nathan Wilbourn

"On a daily basis you're asked to do things that you won't normally do [in your military occupational specialty]," Sgt. Hamzat Saba said. "You adapt and overcome."

The range of additional duties runs the gamut, from drug interdiction and weapons seizures to checkpoints and foot patrols. When the holy month of Ramadan ended in November, the

unit brought some goats, sheep and rice to some Afghans so they could celebrate the festival of Eid, which breaks the fasting observed during Ramadan.

"Normally, food distribution is not our game," Flynn quipped.

The same can't be said for Sgt. Frank Villa, a cook assigned to the unit. But since food preparation is contracted out, Villa's culi-

nary skills aren't needed, unless his colleagues desire a tip to spice up their Meals, Ready to Eat.

These days, a person is more likely to see Villa totting a gun than a spatula.

"You learn as you go," Villa said.

In addition to the extra duties, the battalion is patrolling an area that is considerably larger than

the one its predecessor, the 10th Mountain Division, had when it was in the region.

Capt. Nathan Wilbourn figures the current area of operations is 10 times the size, explaining the New York division primarily stuck to the areas near the airfield. By contrast, the bulk of the artillery battalion bounces around five provinces.

"A lot of these villages [in the new areas] had not been contacted by U.S. forces before," Wilbourn said. "The outlying areas are important, too."

In some of these remote places, Villa said, the children seemed afraid of the GIs.

"The kids," he explained, "would run into the house" at the sight of a U.S. patrol rolling through town.

Over time, the kids stopped running, and the artillery battalion has settled nicely into its expanded role.

"These guys," Flynn said, "are just average Americans out there trying to make things happen."

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KRISTEN CHANDLER TOTH
Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Eulogies praise GI from Army family

BY STEVE LIEWER

Stars and Stripes

Spc. Curtis L. Wooten lived the Army life, from his birth to soldierly parents at Fort Riley, Kan., in 1984, to his own enlistment during the war on terrorism 18 years later.

He died a soldier, too, when a roadside bomb exploded Jan. 4 in Iraq near the armored Humvee in which he was riding as the gunner.

"I feel pride in his service because he followed what I did," his father, Curtis Wooten Sr., a Persian Gulf War veteran from Junction City, Kan., told the Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper last weekend. "But it sucks that it ends this way."

Dozens of friends gathered Wednesday at the Ledward Barracks chapel in Schweinfurt, Germany, to remember Wooten, 20, of the 1st Battalion, 77th Army Regiment, four days after his buddies paid tribute to him in a service at a base near Balad, Iraq.

Wooten followed his parents to Army bases around the world until he was 10. Then they divorced and he went to live with his mother, Dairyene, in Spanaway, Wash.

After graduating from high school in 2002, he joined the Army to get money for college. He hoped

to run his own video production company someday, his father told the Post-Intelligencer.

Wooten trained as a tanker at Fort Knox, Ky., and joined the 1-77 Armor on Jan. 7, 2003. Thirteen months later, the unit deployed to Iraq as an infantry battalion, leaving most of its armored vehicles in Germany.

His unit had joined in Operation Baton Rouge, the liberation of Samarra in late September, and he had just returned to Iraq after spending two weeks at home with his family at Christmas.

In eulogies read at Wednesday's service, members of his unit remembered Wooten as a man who was quick with a quip.

"Wooten always made me laugh, no matter how bad the mission," said Capt. Eric Gagnon, his company commander. "Curtis was the guy that always took the new guy in and made him feel a part of the team."

Lt. Col. David Hubner, the battalion commander, praised Wooten as a brave soldier who loved his family — and haunted the dance clubs of Schweinfurt when the unit was in Germany.

"He was quite possibly the best dancer in town," Hubner said. "His friends marveled at his ability to watch a music video, break down the dance steps and learn the newest moves effortlessly."

Besides his parents, Wooten is survived by one brother, one sister, one half-brother and one half-sister.

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Wooten

Interim Iraqi leader: U.S. invasion deposed 'dynasty of villains'

BY ANGELA DOLAND

The Associated Press

PARIS — Even though no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq, the country's interim president said Thursday that the U.S.-led invasion still served a purpose: to rid Iraq of "a dynasty of villains."

Ghazi al-Yawer was in Paris for talks and lunch with French President Jacques Chirac. Discussions touched on topics from Iraq's scheduled Jan. 30 elections to a French journalist missing in Iraq.

Afterward, al-Yawer was asked if the war in Iraq was worth it in light of the U.S. acknowledgment Wednesday that no weapons of mass destruction were uncovered and the search had ended.

"What has happened has happened," the Iraqi president told reporters, speaking in English. "But the war rid Iraq of a vicious regime which established a dynasty of villains."

"I'm going to go into a hypothetical answer, but right now we are in the middle of a political process," and the country is determined to make the elections a success, he said.

The suspicion that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction was the United States' justification for leading an international coalition to invade Iraq — a move vigorously opposed by France.

Chirac and al-Yawer expressed concern about a French reporter missing in Iraq. Florence Aubertin of Liberation newspaper and her Iraqi translator, Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, were last seen Jan. 5.



AP
Iraq's interim President Sheikh Ghazi al-Yawer, left, shakes hands with French President Jacques Chirac after their meeting Thursday at the Elysee Palace in Paris. The al-Yawer is on a four-day visit in France.

French officials said they have had no confirmation of claims the two were kidnapped, but al-Yawer referred to an "abduction."

He did not give any concrete details.

"It's another manifestation of blind terrorism that makes no distinction between human beings, religions, sex or nationality," al-Yawer said.

Speaking about the elections scheduled for Jan. 30, al-Yawer said his country must do everything possible to encourage all Iraqis to agree.

Chirac agreed with him that the voting must go ahead as scheduled, despite continued violence, he said. The French president did not speak to reporters.

Car bombings continue to surge in Iraq

Since June, when interim government was installed, at least 181 attacks have occurred

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Car bombs echo across Baghdad and a constellation of cities around Iraq nearly every day, inflicting slaughter and blowing off smoke, a reminder to all who see or hear them that the country's insurgents can strike almost anywhere.

Vehicles packed with explosives, often detonated by suicide attackers, have become one of the insurgency's most lethal weapons.

An Associated Press tally shows there have been at least 181 of them since Iraq's interim government took over June 28 — just a handful at first but surging to a rate of one or more a day in recent months.

Those bombs killed about 1,000 people, both Iraqis and Americans, and wounded twice as many. The tally found that 68 bombings were suicide attacks and the rest were detonated by other means. Most involved cars, but some used trucks and even motorcycles.

Less common before June, car bombs have become part of a punishing psychological campaign that has made almost everyone here feel unsafe. They have been used to assassinate Iraqi leaders, attack troop and police convoys, penetrate U.S. armored vehicles being rushed to the country and, seemingly, simply to spread terror.

While American officials say roadside bombs, known as improvised explosive devices, are still the insurgents' most favored weapon, car bombs are often more powerful and usually exact a higher toll.

The spike in recent months supports Defense Department statements that guerrillas are using more lethal explosives to target U.S. troops and intimidate Iraqis ahead of Jan. 30 elections.



The charred remains of a bus sits at the site of a suicide car bombing in Baqouba, Iraq, on July 28. A suicide car bomb exploded outside a police recruiting center killing 70 Iraqis and wounding 56. An Associated Press tally shows there have been at least 181 car bombs since Iraq's interim government took over on June 28.

"The insurgents have modified their tactics to address modifications the U.S. has made to protect its forces," said David L. Phillips, a former U.S. State Department expert on Iraq who is now with the Council on Foreign Relations. "Because there's been a big push to get armored vehicles, hand-shelled vehicles on the road, and they are less susceptible to IEDs, whereas a car bomb still has greater payload."

The bombing toll was compiled from AP's daily reports, based on government

and police statements as well as information gathered by AP staff. No official statistics on such attacks have been publicly released and the number of incidents is at most certainly higher than reported.

The U.S. military and the Iraqi government were asked for their figures but provided none.

According to the AP tally, there were two car bombs on the last day of June, 11 in July and 12 in August. The numbers surged in the following months, with 26 in September,

43 in October and 48 in November — eight of them on a single day, Nov. 6. December saw 27 and January averaging about one a day — a dozen in the first 11 days.

While news of car bombings has become tragically routine, their frequency is an enormous change. The Brookings Institution in Washington, which keeps track of suicide bombings and car bombs that kill two or more people, counted just 84 such attacks in the 12 months through last June.

Car bombs are a chief reason why, heading into Iraq's elections, vehicles will not be allowed anywhere near polling stations, and people traveling between districts will need to have a separate accreditation for their cars.

As the bombings have progressed, more and more have involved suicide bombers, with almost all this month being suicide attacks.

Iraqi and American soldiers have developed a routine for potential car bombs, referred to in the military as VBIEDs, for vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. When a car approaches a patrol or checkpoint without slowing down, a soldier fires a flare.

If that doesn't stop the driver, soldiers shoot at the car's engine, and if that fails, fire at the driver. If it keeps coming, they hit the ground, and pray.

Car bombings have drastically changed the way American troops operate. Patrols view every car with suspicion, and vehicles must stay about 100 yards behind. On narrow roads, approaching cars must pull over as a U.S. convoy drives by, sometimes just inches away. The strain on troops is clear.

The strategy is clear. The vehicle bombings have given the insurgents a potent weapon against the world's most technologically advanced military.

Airmen deploying to Mideast welcome AEF rotation schedule

BY RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — Staff Sgt. Stephen Gaines of the 48th F-15E Strike Squadron at RAF Lakenheath is becoming an old hand at deploying to the Middle East.

He departed Wednesday afternoon for his third visit to the region, along with about 200 of his comrades from the 48th Fighter Wing.

"When they tell you, 'We are going to leave, I know everything to take,' he said.

Even better, he said, the deployment came as no surprise, thanks to an Air Force concept called Air and Space Expeditionary Force, which is designed to put some predictability in an airman's life.

"When you get back, you know you have 15 months to prepare yourself to deploy again," he said.

The AEF concept has been around for about a decade, and it has proved its worth in recent years as the operations tempo has increased, say people who have scheduled their lives around it.

But it now has smoothed out into a program that gives Air Force members the luxury of

planning their lives beyond next month, not worrying about a surprise deployment, airmen are happy to admit. Most airmen deploy for four months at a time, then have 15 months until the next deployment.

"You can go to school and stuff," said Gaines, a 10-year Air Force veteran.

"It does add, for the majority of our people, some stability," said Brig. Gen. Mark T. Matthews, the commander of the 48th Fighter Wing, which is the leading wing for next deployment cycle, AEF 4.

More than 1,000 members of the 48th Fighter Wing are in the process of deploying to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility this month.

The 49th Fighter Squadron has already flown several of its F-15E Strike Eagles to the region.

Other groups of airmen will be deploying in the next week or two, but the group that was long overdue around the passenger terminal Wednesday at RAF Mildenhall was the largest single group to go.

The Air Force would not release specific destinations for security reasons.

(Lt. Col.) Joseph Anderson, a flight surgeon with the 48th Aerospace Medical Squadron, will be chief of aerospace medicine where he is going.

He's known about this deployment since arriving in England in the middle of 2003.

"(The AEF) does lend predictability, absolutely," he said.

The early heads-up provided him time to do the training needed for his specific job, he said. Plus, it also gave him time to savor the opportunity to pay back the Air Force for the training it has given him.

"I'm actually very excited," he said. "The investment they've made in me is just tremendous."

Senior Master Sgt. Antonio Johnson of the 48th Munitions Squadron at RAF Lakenheath is making his second trip to the area. He says the AEF concept is a blessing.

"I'm living proof," he said.

Once he returned from the area in late 2003, he knew he could relax for all of 2004 before joining another AEF rotation.

"If anybody in the Air Force has complaints," he said, "they should talk to our Army brothers and sisters."

Soldiers not only serve longer deployments downrange than Air Force members — 12 months compared to four or six — they often receive a shorter notice of the deployments.

As he waited for a signal to board the contracted aircraft waiting outside in the cold English sunshine, Johnson gazed around the terminal at airmen who were sleeping, talking, reading or just sitting alone.



RON JENSEN/Stars and Stripes

Senior Airman Gabriel Saunders of the 48th Civil Engineer Squadron at RAF Lakenheath, England, catches some shut-eye Wednesday before deploying with a couple hundred other 48th-FWG members to the Middle East.

"I recognize some of the faces that were down there with me last time," he said.

That's a comfort, too, he said, because the experienced airmen will benefit those who have not been to the area.

"It makes them feel at ease when they're down there with someone who's been down there before," he said.

One person on his first deployment is Senior Airman Paul Cepparo of the 48th Civil Engineer Squadron.

"Looking forward to it," said

the 22-year old native of Long Island, N.Y. "I signed up to do my job, serve my country and be the best civil engineer I can be."

Cepparo signed up for the Air Force shortly before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that prompted the ongoing global war on terror. He and his family lost friends among the firefighters who died that day at the World Trade Center.

So did his wife's family. "It was a hard moment for all of us," he said. "That's why we have to (deploy) — to make sure it doesn't happen again."

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Air Force loosing top leaders, official says

BY ROBERT BURNS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Air Force's top weapons-buying official said Wednesday his service is suffering from a leadership vacuum, and he predicted a further exodus of senior officials in the fallout from a feud with Congress over a proposed plane leasing deal with Boeing Co.

Marvin Sambur, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, told a group of reporters that the Air Force is feeling the effects of low morale as a re-

Senior officials leaving in fallout over Boeing deal

sult of the conflict, which centers on claims that senior Air Force officials pushed for a sweetheart deal for Boeing.

"There's a vacuum in several positions with three-star generals, two-star generals—nobody's getting confirmed," Sambur said.

In October, Air Force Gen. Gregory Martin withdrew his nomination to be the next commander of U.S. Pacific Command after he came under fire for the Boeing deal during a confirmation hear-

ing.

Air Force Secretary James Roche is stepping down next week with no replacement yet nominated. Peter Teets, the Air Force undersecretary and director of the National Reconnaissance Office, will take over as the senior Air Force official until a new secretary is confirmed.

Sambur also is quitting. "There are many people who are lining up to leave," Sambur said, adding that some of the Air

Force's most important organizations, including Air Combat Command, are being affected.

Lt. Gen. Ronald E. Keys has been nominated to take command of Air Combat Command, but the Senate has not yet confirmed him. Keys would replace Lt. Gen. Bruce A. Wright, who has been nominated but not yet confirmed by the Senate to take command of U.S. Forces Japan and Pacific Air Forces.

The Air Force official who nego-

tiated the original aerial tanker leasing deal with Boeing, Darleen Druyun, pleaded guilty in federal court last year to conspiracy. She began serving a nine-month prison sentence in Florida this month.

Druyun admitted that she began job talks with Boeing while she was overseeing negotiations on the tanker deal.

The \$2.3 billion tanker contract has since been nullified, and the Pentagon has asked Congress to investigate a wide range of contracts in which Druyun was involved.

Associated Press Writer Matthew Daly contributed to this story.



Iraqi Faisal Faisal, left, waits his turn as another skeleton racer pushes off for a run down the track at the Verizon Sports Complex in Lake Placid, N.Y., during training on Wednesday.

One Iraqi man's dream: Winter Olympics or bust

BY JOHN KEKIS
The Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — It doesn't snow much where 24-year-old Faisal Faisal grew up, it only seems to rain bullets, mortar shells and rockets.

And yet the violence in Baghdad has only served to motivate him to dream an improbable dream — to become the first Iraqi athlete to compete in the Winter Olympics.

"We've never attempted any winter sports before as a country and we're going through difficult times," Faisal said in a telephone interview Wednesday from Lake Placid, where he's learning the sliding sport of skeleton. "If your country gets invaded, it's just a feeling of defeat you get inside if you're proud of your country. It doesn't make you feel so good."

"Our country was going backward," Faisal said. "I won't be able to make big changes, but any change counts. I'll try to do my part."

Faisal, who grew up in a middle-class family with a civil engineer for a father and an architecture teacher for a mother, began his Olympic quest in 1998. After watching the Nagano Games on television, he left Baghdad to study business in Australia and wanted to qualify for the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City in either Alpine skiing or snowboarding.

That ended in failure. "The Iraqi Olympic Committee was not recognizing me and didn't want to get involved in winter sports," said Faisal, who has relied on his family for financial support. "I've been promised a lot of things, but they were just hurdles."

This has not been an easy journey. Faisal lost contact with his family during Operation Iraqi Freedom because the phone lines were cut off and a good friend was killed in the fighting in his homeland.

And there are always the political questions that distract from his athletic goals. "I can't escape who I am. I'm not just an athlete," he said.

I guess I can't always get away with saying I just want to talk about sports. Because our country is so divided, if you make any statement on politics many people won't like it."

Undeterred, Faisal figured he might be able to satisfy his need for speed by calling the U.S. Bobsled and Skeleton Federation (USBSF) in Lake Placid, and when he did they offered to help. The USOC intervened and asked the Iraqi Olympic Committee to recommend Faisal as an athlete.

"The USOC has made all this possible. They gave me the opportunity to come out and try," Faisal said. "If it wasn't for them, no one would have helped me. Now, they're pretty much supporting me 100 percent."

Guard testifies in defense of Graner

Says GI didn't commit some of alleged abuses

BY T.A. BADGER
The Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — A former guard at Abu Ghraib prison testified Thursday that intelligence officers wanted detainees roughed up there, and that Spc. Charles Graner Jr. did not take part in a number of the abuses he is accused of committing.

But the defense witness, former Spc. Megan Ambuhl, admitted under cross-examination that she had a brief sexual relationship with Graner and remains a close friend.

"And you don't want your friend to go to jail?" asked Maj. Michael Holley, the prosecutor.

"No, sir," she answered. Ambuhl, who made a plea deal with prosecutors regarding her own actions at Abu Ghraib, also said she lied to investigators who sought to search her personal computer for photos and other evidence of abuse.

Graner, 36, is the first soldier to

be tried in the Abu Ghraib scandal and is alleged to be the ringleader of the abuse. He is accused of conspiracy to abuse detainees, assault, dereliction of duty and committing indecent acts, and faces up to 17½ years in prison if convicted.

The defense maintains that military and civilian intelligence agents controlled Graner's area of Abu Ghraib, and that Graner had to follow their orders to soften up prisoners for interrogation.

Ambuhl testified that intelligence officers directed the prison guards to rough up detainees sexually humiliate detainees, and that the guards were praised for their efforts.

On one occasion, she said, an intelligence officer known as Steve told guards to "break" a prisoner known as al-Qaida, who was believed to have valuable information.

"Steve told us that we were doing a good job and that breaking al-Qaida would save a lot of



Army Spc. Charles Graner arrives for his court-martial at Fort Hood, Texas, on Thursday.

lives," she said. Another time, she said, two military intelligence officers told Graner to physically abuse a prisoner in a shower.

Among other things, Graner is accused of stacking naked detainees in a human pyramid and later ordering them to masturbate while other soldiers took photographs. He also allegedly punched one man in the head hard enough to knock him out, and struck an injured prisoner with a collapsible metal stick.

Article 32 ends for SEAL accused of abusing Iraqi

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Prosecutors said actions by a Navy SEAL lieutenant accused of abusing an Iraqi at Abu Ghraib prison were "unacceptable by any standard," while the officer's lawyer said nothing he did warranted a court-martial.

The arguments came as a five-day Article 32 hearing, the equivalent of a civilian grand jury, concluded Wednesday. The Navy's top SEAL, Rear Adm. Joe Maguire, will decide whether the officer should face court-martial. He did not say when he would issue his recommendation.

Prosecutors said the lieutenant, who was not identified, posed in degrading photos with the handcuffed and hooded prisoner, who died a short time later. The SEAL was accused of assault, maltreatment and conduct unbecoming an

officer for his handling of detainees.

Defense attorney Matthew Freedus said the government's witnesses contradicted one another and that Navy guidelines about taking pictures of detainees was unclear.

In the photos, which were shown in court, the lieutenant is seen thumbs-up while his men pointed their weapons at a hooded and handcuffed detainee in the back of a Humvee. In another photo, the lieutenant is seen holding next to another detainee lying on the ground wearing a pumpkin mask.

Much of the evidence in the case centered on Iraqi Mandel al-Jamadi, a suspect in the bombing of a Red Cross facility.

Al-Jamadi was captured by SEALs during a joint CIA-special operations mission in November 2003. He died a few hours later

under CIA interrogation in the shower room at Abu Ghraib prison.

The hearing ended without an answer to the question of what role the CIA played in al-Jamadi's death.

Freedus was prevented from asking a former Army criminal investigator who led an inquiry into the death last year what position the prisoner was in when he died. The Navy officer reviewing the evidence, Lt. Cmdr. William Boland, said the question was "material, but not relevant." He added that he would not recommend any charges related to al-Jamadi's death.

The hearing was conducted under special security precautions. A naval security officer monitored the hearing and halted testimony to avoid disclosing classified information. Reporters were cleared from the courtroom numerous times.

IN THE WORLD

Indonesia: Some aid missions need escorts

Government fears rebel attacks on relief efforts; large-scale fumigation planned

BY JIM GOMEZ

The Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia—Indonesia on Thursday ordered foreign aid workers in tsunami-devastated Aceh province to have military escorts in areas facing violence by insurgents, even as the vice president welcomed a cease-fire offer by the rebels. The total death toll from the disaster rose to more than 157,000.

Relief groups have not reported any security problems in Aceh, where rebels have fought a low-level separatist war against government troops for three decades, and some worried that the new restrictions could harm their reputation for independence.

But Indonesian military spokesman Col. Ahmad Yuni Basuki said in a telephone interview that the army considers only the areas around the provincial capital Banda Aceh and the stricken coastal town of Meulaboh safe for foreigners.

"Other areas aside from that are potential trouble spots," he said. Anyone going to the trouble zones must take military escorts, but Basuki warned: "We don't have enough personnel to secure everyone."

Health officials, meanwhile, planned a massive spraying campaign starting Friday in Indonesia's disaster zone to head off the threat of malaria, which one expert said could kill up to 10,000 people in the coming months if authorities don't act quickly to kill mosquitoes.

Indonesia's Social Affairs Ministry raised the country's official death toll from the Dec. 26 disaster to 110,229, an increase of nearly 4,000. Sumatra island's Aceh province was worst hit, with the number of people missing there at

more than 12,000, with 703,518 homeless survivors.

Death tolls also went up in India — by 345, to 10,672 — and in Sri Lanka — by six, to 30,899. The overall toll across 11 nations stands at 157,642.

Indonesia's restrictions — which include an order that aid workers declare their travel plans or face expulsion — highlight its sensitivity over foreign involvement in the humanitarian effort, especially that of troops from the United States, Australia, Singapore and Japan.

The security measures represent an effort to regain control of Aceh and the west coast of Sumatra island. Before the disaster, the military controlled Aceh with a tight grip, and foreign journalists and aid workers were barred. Widespread rights abuses were reported.

Rebel leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a cease-fire they declared hours after the Dec. 26 earthquake that sent killer waves fanning out across the Indian Ocean.

Indonesia's vice president welcomed the cease-fire offer.

"Indonesia will assist efforts toward it," Jusuf Kalla said at the vice presidential palace.

The U.S. ambassador to Indonesia urged Jakarta and rebels to negotiate peace. "Both sides should get together quickly, negotiate a settlement and get on with rebuilding Aceh," ambassador B. Lynn Paden said Thursday.

Kalla said Tuesday that Indonesia wants the foreign troops to leave the country by late March — sooner if possible. Survivors among the tens of thousands living in refugee camps welcomed the foreign troops, which have been flying helicopter aid missions to otherwise inaccessible areas and running field hospitals.



Lakshmi, 28, makes an earthen oven Thursday in the ruins of what was her kitchen at Karaikkal Medu village, in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Lakshmi's house was destroyed in the Dec. 26 tsunami.

USS Duluth to deliver aid near Sri Lanka rebel stronghold

BY TINI TRAN

The Associated Press

ABOARD THE USS DULUTH, Sri Lanka—The USS Duluth was bound for eastern Sri Lankan shores on Thursday to carry out tsunami relief work that will bring it close to areas controlled by Tamil Tiger rebels.

The amphibious assault ship, with 400 Marines and 400 Navy personnel aboard, set sail two days after it anchored off the southern coast, where it had delivered heavy machinery such as bulldozers and trucks as well as humanitarian supplies.

The ship's captain, Cmdr. Larry Grippin, said 30 tons of re-

lief supplies would be dropped off Friday near the eastern town of Ampara, one of the worst hit by the disaster.

The supplies will be transported by three helicopters to an area so badly devastated by the tsunami that it is unrecognizable except by air, said public affairs officer Ensign Nick Rogers.

"All the roads are in bad shape. The area around it has been cut off from regular contact," Rogers said. "This is something the government asked us to do because they don't have the capability to do that."

In eastern Sri Lanka, Tamils and Muslims are the major communities and the Tamil Tiger rebels have considerable influence.

The area was the scene of a major clash between the mainstream rebel group and a break-away faction in March and April last year.

The Tigers have made no comment on either the landing of U.S. soldiers or their movement to the east. But a rebel-backed Tamil politician has charged that the troops engaged in relief efforts might use the operation as a cover to spy on the rebels and give intelligence to the government.

"They may try to collect details to help the government crush the Tamil national struggle in a future conflict," Tamil rebel political leader Nallathambi Srikantha told Voice of Tigers radio.

U.S. envoy to work with EU on terror

BRUSSELS, Belgium—Washington will station a top envoy in Brussels on a permanent basis to work with European Union officials in the fight against terrorism, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said Thursday, signaling a mending of ties after a stretch of trans-Atlantic tensions.

Ridge said a senior U.S. official will be in place at the U.S. mission to the European Union by April 1.

"The United States shares an important partnership with the European Union," Ridge said during a speech at a European think-tank.

Ridge's remarks were seen as part of warming relations ahead of a Feb. 22 visit to EU headquarters by President Bush.

Six Afghan soldiers kidnapped, killed

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan—Gunmen kidnapped six government soldiers in a former Taliban stronghold in southern Afghanistan and dumped their bullet-ridden bodies in a canal, a local official said Thursday.

The six were missing on Wednesday during a patrol in the Helmand province, 220 miles southwest of the capital, Kabul, said Mohammed Wali, a provincial government spokesman.

A government spokesman blamed Taliban guerrillas for the killings, but provided no evidence to support his assertion.



Thursday's front page of the British newspaper, The Sun, which shows Britain's Prince Harry with a cigarette and drink in hand, wearing a swastika armband at a party.

Royal scandal: Prince Harry dons swastika at costume party

BY ROBERT BARR

The Associated Press

LONDON—Being the son of Princess Diana buys some sympathy, but not enough to get away with wearing a Nazi uniform.

So Prince Harry is learning, to immense royal embarrassment, after his party costume provoked outrage from Jewish groups and politicians.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center urged the wayward 20-year-old to go to Auschwitz to atone; the leader of the opposition Conservative Party demanded a public apology; and another lawmaker wanted Harry barred from the army.

"What Harry did was both stupid and evil," said Lord Janner, a senior figure in Britain's Jewish community. "The time has come for him to make a public apology."

Harry made his first apology Wednesday night, just as The Sun

newspaper's first edition was hitting the streets with a big headline—HARRY THE NAZI—and a picture of the young royal wearing a swastika armband.

The picture was snapped by a guest at a fancy-dress birthday party on Saturday, and apparently sold to The Sun. Prince William reportedly was attired as a leopard and lion for the birthday party, which had a "native and colonial" theme.

"It was a poor choice of costume and I apologize," Harry said in a statement issued through the office of his father, Prince Charles.

In October, Harry got into a fist-fight with a photographer outside a nightclub. Before that, a former art teacher at Eton claimed she had helped Harry cheat on an exam—a charge rejected by a tribunal. And in 2002, Charles made Harry spend a day at a drug rehabilitation center after he was caught smoking marijuana.

Iran wary of IAEA inspection of complex

BY ALI AKBAR DAREINI

The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iranian officials vowed careful watch for any attempted espionage by international inspectors who were to take environmental samples Thursday at a military complex the United States alleges may be involved in nuclear weapons research.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency, arrived in Iran on Wednesday for a visit to the huge Parchin military complex just outside the capital Tehran, according to state-run television.

Iran has said it will allow U.N. nuclear experts to take environmental samples from landscaped areas outside the military complex's ammunition production workshops but that it won't allow them to inspect military equipment.

The IAEA has been pressing Tehran for months to be allowed to inspect the complex, long used to research, develop and produce ammunition, missiles and high explosives.

At IAEA headquarters in Vienna, agency spokesman Mark Gwosdzek said Thursday only that a visit would take place: "I confirm that a team of IAEA inspectors is today conducting an inspection at Parchin, including the taking of environmental samples."

In leaks to media last year, unidentified U.S. intelligence officials were quoted as saying a secured site at Parchin may be being used in research on high-explosive components for use in nuclear weapons. Iran repeatedly has denied allegations of a secret nuclear weapons program, saying its nuclear activities are for peaceful energy purposes.

"Iran's red line for entry of IAEA inspectors into military sites, including Parchin, is to protect the secrets of the country's conventional military capabilities," top nuclear negotiator Hossein Mousavian was quoted in the newspaper's government-owned daily "Iran" as saying.

"We are watchful. We have allowed [the IAEA] visit to our military sites, but we are watchful not to allow any espionage or intelligence theft from these sites," the newspaper also quoted him as telling top military officials. It did not say when he addressed them.

Mousavian and other Iranian nuclear officials could not be reached Thursday for comment about the inspection, which journalists were not allowed to attend.

Under international pressure, Iran suspended uranium enrichment and all related activities in November, hoping to avert U.N. Security Council sanctions. The IAEA agreed to police the suspension of Iran's nuclear activities.



Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, left, and Palestinian Authority president-elect Mahmoud Abbas participate in a meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday. Abbas said that he is ready to honor the security commitments in the "road map," a peace plan backed by the United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations, adding that he hopes to resume peace talks with Israel soon.

Abbas says he'll address security commitments

BY MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH

The Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said Thursday that he is ready to honor the security commitments in an internationally backed peace plan, adding that he hopes to resume peace talks with Israel soon.

Meanwhile, a top Hamas leader held out the possibility of a cease-fire with Israel. Sheikh Hassan Yousef, the group's top official in the West Bank, also said Hamas does not seek to eliminate Israel.

Abbas, elected earlier this week, said Thursday he is eager to restart talks on the "road map," a peace plan backed by the United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations.

The plan, which envisions an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, has been stalled since it was launched in mid-2003 amid violations by both sides. The road

map requires Israel to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza, while Palestinians must dismantle militant groups.

"We emphasize before you that we are committing to the road map," Abbas said after a meeting with local and international Christian leaders.

"As you know, this plan starts with security commitments and eventually deals with the final status issues, like borders and Jerusalem. We are ready to implement our commitments. We hope the Israeli side will do the same," he added.

Abbas did not specify what sort of security measures he is ready to take, but securing a cease-fire promise from Hamas would give him a boost. He has rejected Israeli calls to confront militants, trying instead to co-opt them.

Abbas will have a difficult time moving forward without an agreement with the militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

In public, the groups have re-

jected calls for a cease-fire, but have signaled they are open to the idea if Abbas can guarantee their safety from Israel. Abbas also appears to have wide public support from a Palestinian public weary from more than four years of fighting with Israel.

Acknowledging the new political landscape, Yousef, the Hamas leader, said the group might reconsider its violent tactics, though he said no decision has been made.

"We read the regional and the international reality, and the changes that have taken place based on this reality, and we take positions according to these changes," he said Thursday.

"Hamas doesn't want to eliminate Israel. Hamas is a realistic political movement," he added.

Abbas is to be sworn into office on Saturday. He said that soon after he forms a new government, "there will be contacts with Israel that will start with calm and security, and then move to the other issues."

Senate delegation to meet NATO on Iraq, Afghanistan

The Associated Press

BRUSSELS, Belgium — A delegation of U.S. senators will meet with NATO's governing body Thursday for talks expected to focus on the alliance's missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The group, led by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, arrives in Brussels after a trip that has taken in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iraq and Sri Lanka. NATO has 100 soldiers in Iraq preparing a training mission for Iraqi officials. That is expected to increase to 300 as the operation gathers pace.

In Afghanistan, NATO has 8,000 peacekeepers in the north and in Kabul, the capital.

The alliance is trying to muster troops to expand

the operation into the west of the country and send temporary reinforcements to help with parliamentary elections scheduled for April.

Alliance military experts also are drawing up plans to integrate the NATO peacekeeping mission with the separate, U.S.-led force of 18,000 which is fighting Taliban and al-Qaida remnants. Such a move is backed by the United States, but Germany and France have doubts.

Accompanying Frist are Majority Whip Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky; Senator Norm Coleman, Republican from Minnesota; and Senator Mike DeWine, Republican from Ohio.

NATO officials said their meeting with ambassadors from the 26 allied nations is part of a drive to strengthen their role in trans-Atlantic dialogue.

Thatcher admits guilt

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — Sir Mark Thatcher pleaded guilty Thursday to unwittingly helping to finance a foiled coup plot in oil-rich Equatorial Guinea, accepting a \$506,000 fine and suspended jail sentence.

The plea deal allows Thatcher, the son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, to leave South Africa and to rejoin his family in the United States.

Mark Thatcher admitted in the Cape High Court that he paid to charter a helicopter, which mercenaries planned to use in their attempted takeover. But he maintains he believed it was to be used for humanitarian purposes, according to his lawyers and a person close to the family.

Only later did he begin to suspect the helicopter would be used for military purposes, according to a statement issued by George van Niekerk, a member of his legal team.

13 students die

TEHRAN, Iran, — Thirteen elementary school students died Thursday in a school fire that erupted after a malfunctioning heater ignited a nearby barrel of kerosene, a local official said.

One teacher was in serious condition in a local hospital after the fire in Safian village, some 435 miles south of Tehran, in Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari province.

District Governor Ali Khani told state television said the dead included seven girls and six boys. He said the 13 students and the teacher were the only people in the school at the time of the fire.

Record airline flares

FRANKFURT, Germany — Frankfurt Airport, continental Europe's largest, enjoyed an unprecedented number of flares in 2004, with a 5.7 percent jump in traffic over 2003, its operator said Thursday.

The airport closed the year with 51.1 million passengers, setting a new annual passenger record, said Fraport AG, its operating company.

Most of the growth was seen in intercontinental flights, particularly connections to North America, the Middle East, and southern Africa.

It also achieved double-digit growth in freight tonnage, which was up 13.1 percent over 2003.

Black Hawk crashes

BOGOTA, Colombia — A Black Hawk helicopter crashed Thursday during a counterterrorism mission in the jungles of southwest Colombia, killing all 20 soldiers aboard, the army said.

The helicopter, used in the U.S.-funded anti-drug effort called Plan Colombia, went down just after midnight near the town of Olaya, 370 miles southwest of the capital.

Early investigations indicate the crash occurred due to "bad weather," according to the army statement.

The Black Hawk that went down was part of an assault mission that included seven other aircraft, the statement said.

Speaking on local radio, army chief Gen. Reinaldo Castellanos said the area is crawling with Marxist guerrillas and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

From The Associated Press

Spanish voices lobby for jobs

Actors who dub 'The Simpsons' seek support in labor dispute

BY MORGAN LEE

The Associated Press

MEXICO CITY — Marge Simpson is near tears, and the normally menacing Mr. Burns is full of warmth and gratitude.

The union actors who dub "The Simpsons" into Spanish are asking their Mexican audience for help as they fight for their livelihoods in a labor dispute that could silence the original Spanish voices from the 15-year-old animated comedy.

"Marge is very sad," said Nancy Mackenzie, the voice of the Simpsons matriarch. "I don't believe they'll replace us. Something deep inside says no."

The disagreement between the actors union and a Mexican contracting company is in the hands of government labor arbitrators at a time when the actors say they normally would be sitting down to tape the upcoming season of "The Simpsons."

If an agreement isn't reached, the actors fear the company will hire new voices, changing the cartoon's Spanish alter egos — voices known throughout Latin America.

At a news conference this week, Gabriel Chavez, the voice of dastardly power plant owner "Sner Burns," thanked fans who have objected to casting changes as the union negotiates its demands.

"The only thing I can say is, 'Heck, don't stop coming around to the nuclear plant in Springfield,'" Chavez said in his Mr. Burns voice, referring to the imaginary home town of the Simpsons family. "And I'm inviting you, I'm taking everybody out to drink at Moe's tavern. And it's free."

The Mexico's National Actors Association, a union founded in 1934 that now includes about 15,000 members, has accused a Mexican contractor of attempting



AP

A labor dispute could change the voices of the Simpson family in Latin America. From left are Humberto Velez (voice of Homer Simpson in Spanish), Claudia Motta (Bart Simpson), Nancy Mackenzie (Marge Simpson), Pety Acovedo (Lisa Simpson) and Gabriel Chavez (Mr. Burns) at a Tuesday news conference in Mexico City.

to hire too many nonunion voices and breaking provisions of a collective bargaining agreement that dictates exclusive use of union labor.

The contractor, Grabaciones y Doblajes Internacionales, maintains it has invited National Actors Association members and other actors to continue dubbing the cartoon series, but that the union is using strong-arm tactics to hold onto most parts.

The company argues it needs the new voices in order to compete.

"With attitudes like these, our country has lost ground for dub-

bing in Latin America," the company said in a news release.

"Much of this work today is done in Venezuela, Colombia and, more recently, in Argentina and Chile."

But Humberto Velez, the Spanish voice of Homer Simpson, said he makes only about \$55 per episode and feels compelled to stand up for the union that pays his benefits.

"We're not people who like to fight," Velez said. "The only thing we know how to do is act... But we will never let people that aren't interested in agreements take away our rights for their own benefit."

Strawberry Fields set for closure

The Associated Press

LONDON — Strawberry Fields is not forever, after all.

The Liverpool children's home that inspired the Beatles' hit song is to close, officials said Wednesday.

The psychedelic single "Strawberry Fields Forever" was released in February 1967 quickly made it to No. 2 in the British charts, but it was kept out of the top slot by Engelbert Humperdinck's "Release Me."

John Lennon wrote the song's dreamy lyrics about a time in his childhood when he lived near the Strawberry Fields orphanage. It has been suggested that Lennon felt a kinship with the orphans after he was abandoned by his father and his mother, Julia, sent him to live with his Aunt Mimi, who raised him.

The Salvation Army, which now runs Strawberry Fields, said the current preference for placing children with foster families has reduced the need for orphanages. Only three youngsters remain at the home in Liverpool's Wootton district.

"We have to give two years' notice of closure, which we did yesterday, but there is no precise date for closure yet," said Marion Drew, divisional leader for the Northwest region.

Message for our men and women in uniform...

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IN THE STATES

Time cut for Martha?

NEW YORK — Martha Stewart's legal team is reportedly studying whether a Supreme Court ruling tossing out federal sentencing guidelines could shorten the length of her confinement. The decision will affect people whose cases are pending, or defendants whose first appeals are not yet completed — like Stewart. The homemaking expert was sentenced to five months in prison and five months of home confinement after being convicted of lying about why she unloaded shares of ImClone Systems Inc. stock before the price plunged.

Bribery case guilty plea

PHILADELPHIA — A former J.P. Morgan vice president, Anthony C. Snell, pleaded guilty Thursday to arranging a \$50,000 payment to a close friend and adviser of Mayor John F. Street in an attempt to win favor with the administration.

Investigators accused Snell and his supervisor of submitting a false invoice to the company to make it appear as if Street confidant Ronald A. White had performed some legal work for J.P. Morgan.

White died in November while awaiting trial.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Snell could receive up to a year in prison.

FBI agents learned of the alleged payment when they tapped White's phone and bugged his office during a lengthy investigation into the conduct of several municipal officials in Philadelphia.

Passport prints urged

WASHINGTON — The United States should put the fingerprints of its citizens on passports to enhance global security, Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said in a recommendation risking a privacy fight at home.

Ridge said Wednesday passports could ideally include biometric finger scans — for all 10 fingers — to help customs officials quickly and accurately identify U.S. travelers. He offered no details on how the plan might deal with privacy concerns or guard against international identity theft.

"If we're going to ask the rest of the world to put fingerprints on their passports, we ought to put our fingerprints on our passports," Ridge said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies before heading overseas to talk about security ties with the European Union.

No-fly list to stand

SEATTLE — A federal judge denied a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the government's no-fly list of terror suspects barred from boarding airlines.

U.S. District Judge Thomas S. Zilly threw out the bulk of the case for lack of jurisdiction, saying that most claims brought by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of people with names identical or similar to those on the list should be directed to a federal appeals court.

He dismissed the rest of the case on the merits, saying the no-fly list had resulted in no "tragic harm" to the plaintiffs' lives.

From wire reports

Residents survey storm damage

BY KEN RITTER

The Associated Press

OVERTON, Nev. — Unwilling to wait any longer and ignoring warnings that more water might be on the way, residents in the West returned to homes damaged by storm-swollen creeks and rivers.

"We've just got a big mess to clean up," said James Watkins, 50, as churning brown water receded along his Overton home.

As residents came, emergency responders began pulling out at dawn Thursday from this small southern Nevada town, replaced by road crews and health officials looking at the safety of the water supply and sewer systems, and testing roads flooded when water crested Wednesday.

Heaviest flooding was concentrated here, in the area where Nevada, Arizona and Utah meet; 18 homes were destroyed or condemned in St. George, Utah.

North Dakota experienced blizzard or near-blizzard conditions, followed by a wind chill advisory that local officials said was apparently a tornado.

But the worst losses were at La



A man in Santa Clara, Utah, speaks on his cell phone Wednesday at the end of a cul-de-sac, where a house stood until the night before.

zero. Two people were killed and 13 injured in southern Arkansas' Union County late Wednesday or early Thursday by a violent storm that local officials said was apparently a tornado.

But the worst losses were at La

Conchita in California's Ventura County, where a mudslide Monday crushed 15 homes and killed 10 residents.

"We have seen the power of nature cause damage and despair, but we will match that power with our own resolve," California

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said Wednesday, surveying the devastation caused by the huge mudslide.

A hillside began eroding away from beneath a private road in the tony Mount Olympus area of the Hollywood Hills, and 13 people were evacuated as five homes were red-tagged as unsafe. Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn said Wednesday the city had sustained damage totaling about \$10 million.

At least 18 homes have been lost or condemned because of record flood waters along the Santa Clara River in Utah. Some 100 families are reportedly displaced.

The Muddy River fanned out over ranches and farms, collapsed riverbanks near downtown Overton and forced an estimated 200 people to flee. Officials warned that flooding remained possible overnight.

"We're expecting a surge," police Sgt. Michael Dailey said after night fell on a second day of on-again, off-again flood advisories. "But we believe the widened channel will be able to handle it."

US Airways gets finance extension approval

The Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A bankruptcy judge overseeing the reorganization of US Airways gave its approval Thursday to a deal in which the Air Transportation Stabilization Board will provide the financing necessary for the airline to continue operations.

U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Stephen Mitchell gave his blessing to an extension through June 30, giving the air carrier the breathing room it said it needs to emerge from bankruptcy.

The extension comes after US Airways, a unit of US Airways Group Inc., extracted more than \$800 million in annual concessions from its labor unions. Most unions reluctantly agreed to accept pay and benefit cuts, but Mitchell last week imposed an estimated \$269 million in concessions on the International Association of Machinists when that union failed to reach a deal.

US Airways said it needed those savings to convince the ATSB to extend the financing agreement, announced Thursday. The current deal was to expire Saturday, and the airline had said it would likely have to liquidate if it could not obtain an extension.

Despite the extensive labor agreement, US Airways said it must find a new investor to provide hundreds of millions of dollars for it to be able to emerge from bankruptcy.



Firefighters cut a van free from under a tractor trailer Wednesday on I-96 near Williamston, Mich. State police closed a 12-mile stretch of the highway in both directions following large, deadly pileups.

Deadly pileups in Mich., Indiana

BY DAVID EGGERT

The Associated Press

ALAIEDON TOWNSHIP, Mich. — At least two people died and 37 others were injured when about 200 vehicles crashed Wednesday in thick fog on a Michigan highway, police said.

One person also was killed in Indiana when at least 20 vehicles piled up amid heavy fog on a highway east of South Bend. Numerous others were injured.

In Michigan, a 14-year-old boy was killed when the sport utility vehicle he was riding in and about 10 other vehicles — including a tractor-trailer — crashed on Interstate 96 outside Lansing. The boy's mother and grandmother were in critical condition, Ingham County Sheriff Gene Wriggelsworth said. The other fatal crash occurred about 30 minutes later when a man hit a semitrailer from behind, Wriggelsworth said. The victim was not immediately identified.

A total of 114 vehicles were involved in pileups in the eastbound lanes, while between 80 and 100 vehicles crashed in the westbound lanes, the sheriff's department said.

At least eighteen people were being treated Wednesday evening at a hospital in Lansing. State police closed a 12-mile stretch of the highway in both directions following the accidents.

The chain-reaction collision in Indiana left wrecked vehicles scattered Wednesday morning in both directions over a three-mile stretch of the Indiana Toll Road, state police Sgt. Rodger Poppewell said. Police closed a 43-mile stretch of the highway for more than six hours.

Poppewell said a man riding in a van was killed when the vehicle was caught between two tractor-trailers.

Two ambulances were also struck by semitrailers as paramedics treated injured drivers, Poppewell said. No emergency workers were hurt.

At least seven injured people were treated at hospitals in the Indiana crashes.

LANSING (MICH.) STATE JOURNAL/AP

Bush inauguration may cost \$40 million

BY JIM ABRAMS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — It will take President Bush less than a minute to take the oath of office next Thursday, but before the inauguration events are over some \$40 million may have been spent on parades, parties and pyrotechnics.

And, the doesn't include the costs of the most intense security operation in inaugural history.

The amount spent on this year's festivities will rival the \$40 million raised to celebrate Bush's first inauguration in 2001, and will exceed the \$33 million spent by President Clinton in 1993 when Democrats returned to the White House for the first time in 12 years.

While the partying is being paid for privately, there have been some muttering about the scale of the celebrations at a time of war and natural disaster.

"Precedent suggests that inaugural festivities should be muted — if not canceled — in wartime," Anthony Weiner, a Democratic congressman from New York, wrote Bush on Tuesday.

Money for the celebratory activities is being raised by the Presidential Inaugural Committee, which as of the end of last week had received \$18 million, much in six-figure donations from wealthy supporters and corporate sponsors.

Among the dozens of donors who've given at least \$250,000 do-

nots are retailer Home Depot, Bank of America Corp., pharmaceutical company Bristol-Myers Squibb and Ford Motor Co.

Kevin Sheridan, a spokesman for the committee, said the fund-raisers were confident they would reach their goals. Sales of inaugural memorabilia, another source of revenue, have been even better than in 2001, he said.

The big donors are rewarded with a variety of inaugural packages, including meetings with political VIPs, tickets to the swearing-in ceremony and parade, and hard-to-get entry into the official inaugural balls and dinners.

The events begin Tuesday with a salute to the troops and a youth concert. On Wednesday there will be a celebration on the Ellipse park, including a fireworks show, and three candlelight dinners.

On Thursday afternoon, after Bush takes the oath of office at the Capitol, some 11,000 people will take part in a parade from the Capitol down Pennsylvania Avenue, to the White House. That night there will be nine official balls.

D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams has estimated it will cost the district \$17.3 million to help pay for security at the first post-Sept. 11 inauguration, which includes 6,000 law officers and 2,500 military personnel to guard the 250,000 people at the swearing-in and the half-million expected to line the parade route.

Williams, in a letter last month to Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, said he can use \$5.4 million from a fund for special events in the capital, but the other \$11.9 million will have to come from the city's federal homeland security budget.

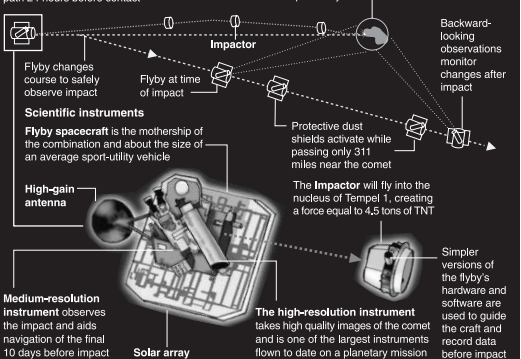
Inauguration day, with its street closings and heightened security, will also be a holiday for federal workers in the Washington area. That, according to the Office of Personnel Management, costs taxpayers an estimated \$66 million.

NASA launches Deep Impact

NASA's spacecraft Deep Impact blasted off Wednesday during a launch window of only one second. The one-way, 268-million-mile voyage over six months will deploy a probe that will blast a crater into Comet Tempel 1 and study the materials from the impact.

Impact events

Impactor released into the comet's path 24 hours before contact



SOURCE: NASA

AP

NASA comet mission seeks blockbuster of a discovery

BY MARCIA DUNN
The Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — NASA's Deep Impact spacecraft has begun its one-way trip to a fiery confrontation in space — a journey hopefully worthy of its Hollywood name.

The craft blasted off Wednesday on a six-month mission to smash a hole in a comet and give scientists a glimpse of the frozen primordial ingredients of the solar system.

"We are on our way," said Michael A'Hearn of the University of Maryland, the mission's chief scientist. Minutes later, the spacecraft shot out of Earth's orbit and into its collision course.

Scientists are counting on Deep Impact to carve out a crater in Comet Tempel 1 that could almost swallow the Roman Colosseum. It will be humans' first look into the heart of a comet, a celestial snowball still containing the original building blocks of the sun and the planets.

The smashup is set for the Fourth of July.

The flight was barely under way when an over-

heating problem was detected by the spacecraft itself. Onboard computer software put Deep Impact in a protective "sleep" mode that flight controllers expected to emerge from within 24 hours, via recovery commands.

"We don't see it as a long-term threat by any means," said project manager Richard Grammer. Deep Impact is carrying the most powerful telescope ever sent into deep space. It will remain with the mother ship when the copper-fortified impactor springs free the day before the comet strike, and will observe the event from a safe 300 miles away.

NASA space telescopes like the Hubble will also watch the collision.

Nothing like this has ever been attempted before. Scientists stress that Deep Impact will barely alter the comet's orbital path around the sun and will not put either the comet or a chunk of it on a collision course with Earth.

In the 1998 movie "Deep Impact," astronauts try to blow up a comet in hopes of saving the Earth, but the comet winds up being split in two and one section slams into the Atlantic, creating a huge tsunami on the East Coast.

Hacker infiltrates Secret Service agent's computer

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In the heat of a monthlong hacker investigation into an extraordinary break-in at a leading wireless carrier's network, an Internet informant approached the Secret Service with startling news: The targeted hackers were reading some of the agency's own e-mails and computer files.

The trove of illicit government data included a "highly sensitive"

internal Secret Service memorandum and part of a mutual assistance legal treaty from Russia, according to court records. A hunted hacker turned his sights on the Secret Service, targeting at one point the desktop computer of a Secret Service agent on his trail.

The break-in targeted the network of Bellevue, Wash.-based T-Mobile USA. It was discovered during a broader Secret Service investigation, "Operation Firewall," which targeted under-

ground hacker organizations.

But in a twist, one of the government's investigators was also a T-Mobile customer and sometimes used the wireless network to communicate about the case.

Nicolas Lee Jacobsen, 21, of Santa Ana, Calif., a computer engineer, has been charged with the T-Mobile break-in in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles. Investigators said they traced the hacker's activities to a hotel near Buffalo, N.Y., where Jacobsen was staying.

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OPINION/OMBUDSMAN

Abbas, Sharon have support, need a plan

Detroit Free Press

In a region where so much has gone so wrong for so long, it is difficult to be more than cautiously optimistic about the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East. But the latest developments do augur well.

There is opportunity at hand. If the hatred and mistrust spawned by recent history can be overcome, leadership appears willing to forge a new future that will include an independent Palestinian state sharing the Holy Land with Israel.

President Bush has said he expects this to happen by the end of his second term. That will require the United States to be a forceful and scrupulously honest broker between the two sides. Beyond ending the violence that keeps so much of the world away from cherished religious and historic sites, a renewed involvement in a Mideast peace process offers the United States a chance to improve its international image.

In an election that appeared largely trouble-free, Palestinians on Sunday chose Mahmoud Abbas as their new leader, replacing Yasser Arafat, who died in November. Abbas ran an almost

chotomous campaign, embracing terrorists as heroes while calling for an end to violence against Israel.

At the core, he seems to be a pragmatist, recognizing that a four-year campaign of terror against Israel has done the Palestinians far more harm than good. His wide margin of victory represents an endorsement of that view by the Palestinian people, but Abbas will have to be diligent about keeping seething terrorist elements in line.

Leaders of Hamas insist they will not try to undermine Abbas, but they have not agreed to abandon terrorism.

Meantime, the Israeli Parliament on Monday approved Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's new government, restoring the majority he needs to proceed with Israel's announced pullout of military forces from the Gaza Strip, further enhancing the prospect for productive peace talks.

Both sides are sending signals that their people have had enough. The next question is where are they willing to go from here?

The path is obvious, but in the Middle East, that has rarely been the one taken.

Both sides are sending signals that their people have had enough.



Campaign affected, but didn't dominate, letters page

This is a follow-up column on Stripes' coverage of the 2004 political campaign in the States (the first one, "On balance, Stripes had successful campaign," appeared in the Dec. 9 edition). It deals with letters to the editor on politics during the last four months of the campaign.

Two hundred eighty-two letters were received. One hundred twenty-six of them (44.7 percent) dealt with the campaign. Letters on the presidential candidates and political philosophy totaled 96 of the 126. The remaining 30 campaign-related letters were about media issues. The breakdown of the 96 letters dealing with candidates and the race was: pro-President Bush — 44 (45.8 percent); pro-Sen. John Kerry — 30 (31.3 percent); pro-conservative positions but didn't name Bush 6 (6.2 percent); pro-liberal positions but didn't name Kerry — 5 (5.2 percent); neutral — 11 (11.5 percent).

The tone, as was true of letters in the U.S. newspapers that I read, was strident on both sides in most of the letters.

A pro-Bush letter: "Having made his only qualification to be president of the United States a four-month tour in Vietnam, 'war hero' John Kerry is being confronted with his own accounts of his service record."

A pro-Kerry letter: "Republican re-election committees, and their associates, are known for the nastiness of their campaigns against Democratic opponents. Their recent, and incredible, attack on John Kerry's Vietnam combat record reveals the depth of their nastiness and has taken the Republican Party to an all-time low."

A moderate perspective was reflected in the neutral letters. A soldier in Baghdad wrote: "I generally like to read your letters to the editor page; it is generally filled with good things and supportive things, which make people feel better. ... But all too often it is filled with negative things, such as passing the blame for America's problems, problems with representatives, or problems in society in general. ... The harsh reality is that we are members of the greatest nation in the world and the only reason that we are that nation is because the people stood together in whatever endeavor it faced. We fought to have the freedom that we have."

A sergeant in Baghdad wrote: "[As I read Stripes] I note the strong agreement or disagreement with a wide range of topics. I would just ask all of us to think about how fortunate we are able to voice our disagreement in an open forum."

In the heat of such a close and sharply partisan campaign, it was not surprising for the media to be part of the crossfire. A letter complaining about too much of Fox News Channel on American Forces Network drew two supporting letters and five letters defending APTN. There was not any substance to the original complaint that I could find.

Stripes, The Associated Press and Garry Trudeau's "Donesbury" cartoon strip (which appears on the letters page) also

drew complaints and supporters. Overall there were 15 critical letters and 11 positive letters. The complaint against Stripes was that it had shifted to the left.

One officer in Iraq based his complaint on Stripes being a "leftist rag" because it published only two pictures of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's visit to coalition troops in Baghdad.

The ombudsman also was criticized. After the June 28 ombudsman column "Discovering whether Stripes stories cover all bases," a reader in Germany wrote: "Please, oh, please — spare us 'a series of columns on five topics' from Stars and Stripes' ombudsman — the one I've characterized as the apologist for Stars and Stripes. He has lately 'discovered' whether Stars and Stripes stories 'cover all bases.' As you might expect, he discovers that Stars and Stripes does 'cover all bases.' That I disagree with him, I just figure he doesn't know what he's talking about."

However, it is reassuring to see that Stripes readers continue to write on a wide range of topics and are candid in their views. The subjects included:

■ A letter calling for Rumsfeld to resign

and a follow-up letter defending him;

■ Nearly a dozen letters on whether the use of prostitutes by military personnel should be prohibited;

■ Gasoline prices and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (the number of letters on this topic is down since my last review, but there is still great interest in that issue); and

■ A debate over which NFL games APTN should televise.

It was good news to see not a single letter about mail problems. It also was pleasing to see a large number of letters from Iraq. Of the 282 letters charted, 117 (41 percent) were from military personnel serving in Iraq. On politics, 11 of the 44 pro-Bush letters were from Iraq; three of the 30 pro-Kerry letters were from Iraq.

My conclusion: Stripes continues to carry out its mission of providing through the letters page a great forum for the military community overseas.

Send comments to Joe Ungaro at Ombudsman, Stars and Stripes, 520 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, D.C. 20045-1301. Phone: civilian (410) 364-5032; fax: (410) 364-8696; or e-mail: ombudsman@stripes.com

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



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Study: Texas plant has worst mercury pollution on continent

The Associated Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — A North Texas power plant is North America's worst mercury polluter, according to an international study criticized by the utility that operates the facility.

The study conducted by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation listed TXU Power's Monticello coal-fired plant's Mount Pleasant as logged 2002 emissions at more than twice the levels of any plant in Mexico and Canada.

The commission created to address regional environmental concerns as part of the North American Free Trade Agree-

ment said four other Texas power plants rank among the 20 worst in mercury emissions. The plants include two others operated by TXU.

Environmentalists say mercury moving from these power plants exposes Dallas-Fort Worth area residents to the toxic metal that has been linked to brain damage and developmental disorders.

Dallas-based TXU Corp. said the study failed to note that the Monticello plant no longer uses mercury-rich lignite coal, switching to a cleaner fuel that has reduced its mercury emissions.

"Everyone is searching for a

solution on how to reduce mercury," company spokesman Rand LaVonn said. "TXU is in the forefront."

Study co-author Paul Miller said the analyses of emissions from more than 1,000 coal-fired power plants in Canada, Mexico and the United States do not include recent installations of pollution controls.

"But the essential point remains the same: Texas power plants are high mercury emitters," he said.

The Bush administration is working to finalize new regulations it promises will cut mercury emissions by 70 percent within 15 years.

Drug maker seeks OTC status for its cholesterol blocker

By LAURA MECKLER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The government is considering whether a drug for a serious chronic condition — high cholesterol — should sit on drugstore shelves alongside medicines for headaches, allergies and athlete's foot.

Supporters say making a low-dose cholesterol medicine available without a doctor's prescription would help get needed treatment to millions of Americans who are at risk of heart disease.

"There's a huge treatment gap," said Jerry Hansen, vice president of marketing at Johnson & Johnson-Merck Consumer Pharmaceuticals Co., a joint venture that is asking the Food and Drug Administration for permission to sell a low-dose version of Mevacor over the counter.

The drug, he notes, has been on the market for a long time and has proven quite safe.

But opponents say selling directly to the consumer allows patients to skip doctor visits, where they might be told to change their diet and exercise — both crucial in the effort to lower cholesterol.

"This is going to encourage people to take medication rather than alter other parts of their lifestyle," said Dr. Michael Schloss, clinical co-director of the Cholesterol Treatment and Research Center at New York University.

A panel of FDA scientific advisers was considering the request Thursday and Friday. The FDA

usually follows the recommendations of its advisers.

The drug is only meant for a slice of the population: men 45 and older and women 55 and older whose LDL — low-density lipoprotein, or "bad" cholesterol — count is between 130 and 170. They should also have at least one risk factor for heart disease, such as smoking, high blood pressure, family history of heart disease or an HDL — high-density lipoprotein, or "good" cholesterol — count of less than 40.

Certain patients, such as pregnant women, should not use Mevacor.

Mevacor was the first of the statin drugs, which lower cholesterol by limiting the buildup of artery-clogging fat deposits, reducing the risk of heart attack by about a third. As a group, statins made some \$14 billion in the United States alone last year.

Makers of Mevacor say the company will encourage patients to get their cholesterol checked after they begin treatment, though critics say there's no guarantee patients will do it. The company does not want the FDA to require tests of liver function, despite concerns that the drug can cause inflammation of the liver.

Officials have said they would charge about \$1 for each daily 20-milligram pill if the over-the-counter sales are approved.

That's less than Merck charges for the prescription version, but consumers who have health insurance would have to pay the whole thing, rather than just a co-payment.

Mass. researchers link gene to common form of deafness

By PAUL RECKER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Researchers have identified a gene that prevents the regeneration of inner ear cells that are critical to hearing, a discovery experts say is the first step toward finding a way to correct the most common form of deafness among the elderly.

In laboratory mouse studies at Massachusetts General Hospital, researchers found that by eliminating the effects of a single gene they could cause inner ear cells vital to hearing to regrow. The regrowth replaces lost cells, called hair cells, that are often lost to injury or age.

"Most deafness is caused by the loss of these hair cells," said Zheng-Yi Chen, leader of the hospital research team. "Now we have the means to regenerate these cells."

The goal, said Chen, is to learn to find a way to turn off this gene in the inner ear of humans, probably with a drug, and allow the regrowth of hair cells.

"That would lead to recovery of hearing," said Chen. He is senior author of the study appearing this week in the journal Science.

Dr. James P. Battey, director of the National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disor-

ders, one of the National Institutes of Health, said the discovery by Chen's team "is a very important first step toward learning how to restore hearing in human patients."

The hair cells are a key link in the signal chain that makes hearing possible. The cells line the cochlea, part of the inner ear that sends the sensation of sound to the brain.

Sonic vibrations from the eardrum and bones of the middle ear are relayed to the cochlea where they excite the hair cells. This energy is converted to electrical signals that are carried by nerves to the brain and interpreted as sound.

Humans are born with about 50,000 inner ear hair cells, but the cells decline over time due to injury, disease or age. Once enough of the cells die, then the hearing begins to fade because the cells do not naturally regenerate, said Stefan Heller, a hearing researcher at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

In the study, the research team surveyed all the genes that are active during the embryonic development of the inner ear. The researchers discovered that a protein made by the retinoblastoma, or Rb1, gene halted the growth of hair cells. In effect, they found that the Rb1 protein was a molecular switch that turned off hair cell proliferation.

Power restored to remote Alaskan village under deep freeze

By MARY PEMBERTON

The Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Electricity was restored to most homes in an Arctic village Wednesday, four days after the community lost power in a fierce blizzard and was thrown into a deep freeze.

An Alaska Air National Guard helicopter reached Kaktovik on Tuesday, bringing two technicians who were able to restore power to about three-quarters of the village of 300 people more than 200 miles above the Arctic Circle.

On Wednesday, two National Guard planes dropped off generators, heaters, food, water and other supplies, such as diapers and infant formula. The planes also brought plumbers, mechanics, medical workers and more electrical linemen.

The planes had previously been prevented from landing by snow drifts on the runway. A

third flight carrying propane and other hazardous materials was due in Wednesday night.

A blizzard packing near hurricane-force winds knocked out power to the village Sunday and plunged temperatures to 20 degrees below zero. Officials believe the outage may have been caused by power lines snapping together and arcing during the storm.

Schoolteacher Adam Hausman was staying with five other people in a house that still had no power Wednesday. It was about 30 degrees inside the home, which was being warmed a little with a gas stove, he said.

"We just have been kind of cuddled up in two rooms," he said.

"It has been too cold [for school]. Your hands, you can't even turn the pages."

Many residents sought shelter at the village school until it lost power. About 100 people moved to the village's equipment maintenance building, which had a generator.



Residents of Kaktovik, Alaska, unload emergency supplies Wednesday from an Alaska National Guard C-130 aircraft amid high snow drifts. Electricity was restored to most homes in the Arctic village four days after a blizzard packing near hurricane-force winds knocked out power and plunged temperatures to 20 below zero.

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AG issues warning

MA BOSTON — Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly has warned nursing home owners and managers that they may be violating workers' civil rights by imposing English-only policies that ban them from speaking their native languages, even on breaks.

Nursing homes in recent years have relied on immigrants, many of them Haitian, to take difficult jobs, including bathing and feeding elderly residents and pushing their wheelchairs. But some say workplace discrimination is on the rise as well.

Advocates say nursing homes impose English-only policies that apply even to meal breaks and private telephone conversations.

Reilly issued an advisory opinion to owners warning them that these policies may violate workers' civil rights and open them to legal action.

Officials from Reilly's office and the Massachusetts Extended Care Federation have scheduled a seminar for nursing home operators on how to prevent discrimination in the workplace.

Haitian immigrants make up as much as 80 percent of nursing assistants, advocates say.

Bus driver arrested

TN CLARKSVILLE — A school bus driver has been arrested on charges of sexually assaulting two of his foster children in Maine more than three years ago.

Roger J. Guimond, 57, of Clarksville faces five counts of sexual assault of a juvenile and seven counts of unlawful sexual contact with a juvenile in cases dating to 2001. He was arrested at his home, said Deputy Danny Shelton of the U.S. Marshall's Service office in Nashville.

He was taken to the Montgomery County Jail and awaits extradition to Maine.

Guimond moved to Clarksville from Augusta about two years ago, the Marshall's Service said. He was arrested after marshals received a tip from the Maine State Police that he was living in the town located about 50 miles northwest of Nashville.

Guimond was hired as a substitute bus driver for Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools in March 2003, and moved to full-time status in May 2003. He also worked as a bus driver in Maine.

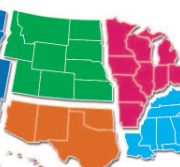
Guimond was placed on unpaid leave by the school system.

He has no known criminal history, and Guimond's personnel file shows he has never been disciplined and no complaints have been filed against him.

2 skiers rescued

CO GRAND JUNCTION — Rescue crews found a woman and her daughter alive two days after they failed to return from cross-country skiing, but the woman's husband was still missing.

Hebra Walker and 18-year-old Camille were found at about 8 a.m. Mesa County sheriff's spokeswoman Susan McBurney said. She did not have details on their condi-



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

tion, but said they did not require medical evacuation from Grand Mesa in western Colorado.

She said there was no word on Dan Walker.

The three skiers had been reported missing a day after they set out.

Up to 8 feet of snow had fallen on the top of 10,500-foot-high Grand Mesa and temperatures have been in the 20s, the National Weather Service said.

States sign agreement

TX AUSTIN — Gov. Rick Perry has signed a concealed handgun reciprocity agreement with Colorado. Texas now has agreements with 15 states to allow citizens with concealed handgun permits to legally carry those weapons. The others are Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming.

School forums planned

WA SEATTLE — The school board is holding seven forums to establish criteria for closing schools. The district needs to close buildings because of a budget gap and declining enrollment. Elementary schools are at 80 percent capacity and middle schools at 70 percent.

Kraft's curbs food ads

IL NORTHFIELD — Kraft Foods plans to curb advertise-



Run in the sun

A runner moves along the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, Calif.

ing of Oreos, regular Kool-Aid and other popular snack foods to children younger than 12 as part of an effort to encourage better eating habits.

The company, the nation's biggest food manufacturer, also said it would begin labeling some healthier products with a flag touting their benefits.

The new marketing program comes as food companies are facing rising criticism from some consumer groups and others that they are contributing to obesity in children.

Two years ago, Kraft had already moved to reduce the fat content in 200 products, cap portions for single-serve packaged snacks and quit marketing snacks at school.

As part of the new marketing program, a "Sensible Solution" label would appear on products high in nutrients such as fiber or calcium or those with low fat, sugar or sodium.

60 days for noose

FL CLEARWATER — A man accused of draping a noose around the shoulders of a black teen at a fast food restaurant was sentenced to 60 days in jail.

The judge also sentenced Louis Giannola IV, who was convicted in December of misdemeanor battery, to 10 months probation and community service. He was spared a harsher sentence because jurors declined to label the incident a hate crime.

In a brief statement read in court, the 20-year-old Giannola apologized to the victim and said he now understands the hurt he caused. Giannola also asked Dionte Hall and his family for forgiveness.

Giannola was arrested after he draped a noose around the neck of Hall, 15, while they and other teens were at a Wendy's restaurant in Largo in January 2004. Prosecutors contend some people Giannola was with were heard making racial slurs.

Giannola said he did not put the noose around Hall's neck out of hate but because another teen, whose own father is black, bet him \$10 he would not do it.

Dead tiger causes stir

CA SACRAMENTO — The first 911 call reported a 400-pound animal on the northbound lane of Highway 99. Another reported a lion.

Then a tiger.

"We got there and confirmed it was in fact a tiger," said California Highway Patrol Sgt. John Mason, who added that it had a very long tail and very big paws.

Mason said a veterinarian told him the animal had been euthanized and was being taken to the University of California-Davis for an autopsy.

The veterinarian was driving behind an associate who drove a pickup truck that swerved to avoid another car. The associate ejected the tiger from the truck.

Mason said the tiger's veterinarian was affiliated with PAWS, or Performing Animal Welfare Society, which cares for abandoned or abused exotic animals. Mason said a tow truck hoisted the 400-pound tiger off the freeway.



About to get a face full of snow

Julia Galloway, 10, bottom, and her sister, Carly, 8, wrestle in the snow at Shiawassee River Walk Park in Fenton, Mich.



Icy grip

A clothes line in north Champaign County near West Liberty, Ohio, holds only ice. An icy winter storm snapped trees and power lines and steady rain pushed rivers beyond their banks in other parts of the state.



Talking mule?

Slider Middle School students Krysta Molina, center, and Karina Bragaglia, far right, watch a mule as they wait for the departure of a wagon train from the Socorro Mission in Socorro, Texas. The mules are part of an effort to recreate by wagon train, in reverse, part of the route of mid-1800s gold rush adventurer William P. Huff's trip from Houston to near Fresno, Calif.



Dueling Elvises Simon Luxton, an Elvis Presley performer from Wellingborough, England, stares into the eyes of the "Elvis at 13" statue while visiting the Elvis Presley Birthplace in Tupelo, Miss., with other British tourists.



Whoa, can't stop A black mallard duck slides in for a landing on the ice in the Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary lagoon in Green Bay, Wis.



Up on the roof Oscar Vasquez, of Safeside Chimney Contractors, works on a "roof up" rebuild of a chimney at a residence on Cedar Street in Norwich, Conn.



Tiny dancers From left, dancers Haley Argo, 3, of Ashaway, R.I.; Danielle Christina, 4, of Pawcatuck, Conn.; Julia Thornton, 4, of Westerly, R.I.; Caelan Holdredge, 3, of Westerly, R.I.; and Lindsey Maresca, 4, of Westerly, R.I., work on their tap steps during a preschool ballet and tap dance class in Westerly, R.I.

Charged with murder

MA LANESBORO — A 20-year-old man was arrested on charges of murdering his stepfather in the first homicide in this Berkshire County town in nearly 25 years, authorities said.

Christopher Robinson was ordered held on \$1 million bail pending his arraignment in Central Berkshire District Court in the killing of Neil E. Olsen, 48, of Lanesboro, said Berkshire District Attorney David Capeless.

Capeless said a preliminary autopsy report showed Olsen died of multiple gunshot wounds and blows to his head.

His body was found on the floor of a horse stall in the barn at his Main Street home, Capeless said. The Berkshire Eagle reported that Olsen had a sign and truck painting business in the barn.

Authorities did not comment on a possible motive.

2 arrested in shooting

MS MERIDIAN — Two people were arrested in a fatal shooting at a hospital that may have been related to an earlier murder-suicide attempt, police said.

One of the suspects was arrested at Rush Foundation Hospital and the other turned himself in to police, Meridian Police Chief Benny Dubose said. Both were expected to be charged.

The man fatally shot at the hospital was the son of a man who Dubose said shot himself and a woman at a Meridian home in an apparent murder-suicide attempt. Dubose said one of the suspects is the woman's son.

The man and woman found at the home did not suffer life-threatening injuries. The fatal shooting victim's name was not immediately released by authorities.

Teacher suspended

MI DEARBORN — A middle school teacher has been suspended with pay while officials investigate a report he told his students that Bedouin Arabs used the Quran as toilet paper.

The teacher is on the faculty of Woodworth Middle School in Dearborn, a Detroit suburb of 100,000. About 30,000 Dearborn residents are Arab-American.

Bedouins are members of historically nomadic tribes and make up about 10 percent of the population of the Middle East. The Quran is the Muslim holy book.

Parents complained to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Council on American-Islamic Relations. Imad Hamad, Michigan director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, said the teacher should apologize.

Cuts to health program

TN NASHVILLE — More than 320,000 adults will be cut from TennCare under cost-saving plans proposed by Gov. Phil Bredesen, a move advocates called a "draconian" reaction to the expanded Medicaid program's spiraling price tag.

Bredesen tried to put the best light on the move, saying he found a way to keep all children covered — while preventing TennCare from bankrupting the state.

His plan calls for eliminating

323,000 adults from a program that covers roughly 1.4 million people — while retaining coverage for all 612,000 children on the program. There also will be reductions in benefits and a plan to move back to managed care organizations — as long as they accept part of the financial risk.

Many other states have been watching what happens to TennCare, once hailed as a model in state-federal partnership for solving the country's health insurance crisis.

Metro cracks down

MN MINNEAPOLIS — Metro Transit police say they're increasing efforts to catch riders who don't purchase tickets for the new Hiawatha light-rail line, which relies partly on the honor system to collect fares. The fine for fare evasion is \$140, plus about \$40 in court costs. Stations have no entry turnstiles, and transit police perform random checks for tickets and passes.

Cow washes in with tide

CA SAN FRANCISCO — The highest tide of the year brought an unusual visitor to Ocean Beach — a dead cow.

While it is not unusual for dead sea animals such as sea lion, God whales to wash up on the beach, this was the first time anyone could remember that a cow ended up on the coast of San Francisco.

The all-black animal is bigger than a calf and smaller than a dairy cow. It was reported to the National Park Police by a visitor.

Where the animal came from or how it got in the ocean is a mystery.

"We've never had a dead cow on the beach before," said National Park Service spokesman Rich Wideman.

Builders replicating boat

ME ROCKPORT — Boat builders are replicating one of the three ships that carried settlers to Virginia in 1607 to establish the first permanent English settlement in the New World. Rockport Marine is building the 88-foot Godspeed for the Jamestown Settlement's living history museum. The \$2.2 million ship is expected to be completed next year.

Plans for merger

CA LOS ANGELES — Voters may decide whether to merge the Los Angeles International Airport police with the city police. A City Council committee voted unanimously to support a ballot measure to remove a City Charter provision requiring an independent airport police force. The recommendation goes to the full council later this month.

Bargaining rescinded

IN INDIANAPOLIS — Gov. Mitch Daniels rescinded executive orders that established collective bargaining and allowed union settlements for about 25,000 state workers, saying they were cumbersome and would hinder his plans to reorganize state government. The move drew criticism from The Unity Team, a union that represents more than 14,000 state employees.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

A true 'Blue' star

On ABC's long-running police drama, Dennis Franz prepares to turn in badge

BY DEBRA LEITHAUSER

The Washington Post

Twelve seasons ago, Detective Andy Sipowicz came on the scene, and, oh, what a charmer he was. Balding and full-bellied, NYPD's finest was crass, crude and rude.

There wasn't much to love, but viewers managed to find it and kept tuning in for more of "NYPD Blue." The ABC drama that's garnered

20 Emmys during a run that ends this season. Behind Sipowicz's volatile facade is Dennis Franz, 60, no newcomer to the cop beat. Franz had previously teamed up with "NYPD Blue" creator Steven Bochco for another law-enforcement show, "Hill Street Blues," where he played not one but two officers in the precinct.

After an unsuccessful spinoff — "Beverly Hills Bunz" — and some other missteps, Franz earned a shield with staying power on "Blue."

Franz isn't sure what awaits him once he turns in his badge — he's thinking more acting, some

traveling with wife Joanie and lots of relaxing. "I'm good at doing nothing," he quipped. But he's ready for the show to end, and he's proud of what he called a "phenomenal run."

Q. You've been through four partners on the show. Who has been your favorite?

A. You're never gonna get that out of me! But from Sipowicz, well, he had a real fondness for John Kelly, which was David Caruso's character.

Q. Sipowicz is believable in part because of all the little details viewers have become familiar with — such as wearing short sleeves with ties, or putting cologne in his armpits. What are the quirks that you love?

A. Well, I like his insistence, how he's thinking he's right about little things. Like, for one example, his pronunciation of the word "prostate." He was certain it was "prostate." Even when John Irvin tries to correct him, Andy insists he's right. Irvin even leaves a dictionary open to the correct spelling on his desk, and Andy gets upset and still insists it's wrong.

Dennis Franz

Andy Sipowicz on "NYPD Blue"

Q. And where do you get inspired?



ABC photo

Dennis Franz is retiring the role of Andy Sipowicz on ABC's "NYPD Blue" after 12 seasons. Franz says Sipowicz is the 28th cop role he's played.

ration for those quirks?

A. It began from our writer and creator, David Milch... He was my role model for Andy. So on a personal level I got a lot of inspiration from him. I began to realize that he was adding himself of a lot of demons through Andy Sipowicz. I also looked to Bill Clark, our executive producer, who used to be a police officer. Between the two of them, I came up with a lot of Andy.

Q. With actress Charlotte Ross off the show, your personal life on-screen wife Connie is less visible. Is that disappointing?

A. It's a big disappointment. It

really came as a surprise... We spent so much time getting the audience to accept this oddball relationship. We worked very hard at that, and I think we won a large portion of the audience over.

Q. Where will this season take Sipowicz? Will we see more tragedy for him?

A. I doubt that very seriously. I think Steven and I and the writers do not want to see Sipowicz go out on the slab. We want to end on an upbeat note for him as far as what's ahead.

Q. How much did your previous roles on "Hill Street Blues" help you create the mannerisms of Sipowicz?

A. Not only those two helped, but Andy Sipowicz is cop No. 28 for me. So all 27 in the past have created those layers.

Q. Terry Wrong, who produced "NYPD 24/7," said the officers he interviewed for that documentary [narrated by Franz] all loved Sipowicz. Wrong said several of those officers have met you when visiting Los Angeles. Do you spend a lot of time with actual police officers around the country?

A. Hardly a week goes by where officers don't come on the set, swapping stories, taking pictures, giving us attaboys. When we film in New York, they're with us 24-7.

At the reception, milkshakes

Rapper Nas and R&B songstress Kelly Rowland were married Saturday during an intimate ceremony.

The musical couple had been dating for two years. They were married in an Atlanta church and their reception was held in the city's upscale Buckhead neighborhood, publicist Tony Ferguson said Tuesday.

"Definitely, if you were there, you were a friend or family member," Ferguson said. "They really wanted to keep it out of the press. They wanted to make that day for just for them."

Nas' brother, Jungle, was best man. His father, jazz musician Olu Dara, also attended.

Kelly, 25, is best known for her chart-topping single "Milkshake."

Nas, 31, snared the hip-hop world's attention with his 1994 debut album, "Illmatic." He has since released several albums and has appeared in the movies "Belly" and "Ticker."

Help for Haitian youth

Dozens of Haitian youths mobbed hip-hop star Wyclef Jean as he visited a slum to inaugurate a program to support education in his impoverished native country.

The youths on Tuesday watched the former Fugees rapper perform an impromptu rendition of his new song "Gonaves" atop a truck in a soccer field in Cite Soleil, a seaside slum outside the capital of Port-au-Prince. Jean was visiting the L'Atletique d'Haiti Sports Academy, an after-school program in Cite Soleil that provides tutoring and sports training for 650 youths.



Jean

He inaugurated an initiative to provide scholarships to help new participants stay in school, a requirement for the after-school program.

Free schools are rare in Haiti, and many families cannot afford tuition.

"What Sammy Sosa has done for the Dominican Republic, that's what I think I can do for Haiti," Jean said, referring to the Dominican-born baseball star who founded a charity for health in education in his country.

Judge rules for Kid Rock

A federal appeals court agreed that trademark and copyright infringement claims brought against singer Kid Rock should be dismissed.

The 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati upheld Tuesday a lower court ruling that Kid Rock's former business associates waited too long to file a lawsuit.

The Detroit rap-rock, whose real name is Robert Ritchie, first sued Alvin

Williams and Earl Blunt of EB-Brn Productions Inc. in May 2001.

He said a 1989 contract that gave EB-Brn sole ownership of the Top Dog trademark and established a partnership with Kid Rock was a fraud. Williams and Blunt countered.

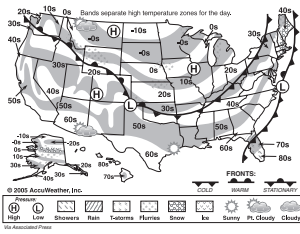
U.S. District Judge Nancy Edmunds dismissed the countersuit in February 2003, saying that even if EB-Brn did acquire ownership of the trademark in 1989, the company abandoned its interest by not using the trademark for at least a decade.

The appeals court agreed, noting that Kid Rock wrote a letter to Williams and Blunt in December 1990 stating that he didn't intend to work with them on his songs.

Stories and photos from wire services



Rock



Check our Relocation Guide
every Saturday to find
Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

The influence of Capricorn planets can be transforming — not in a caterpillar-turned-butterfly way but more in a rebellious-youth-turned-soldier way. There's hot bomb involved. Capricorn is a tough-love energy for certain, but it works brilliantly to push people, situations and projects to the next level.

Your hard work is changing you.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(January 14). You take your life in a new direction this year, and you have more control than ever over one of them. It's liberating to know you can steer yourself with such precision — an achievement in the next seven weeks proves this to be true. Solo endeavors in February make you appreciate partners even more. A Libra or Capricorn could steal your heart.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Scout activities that build under the category of success don't make you feel successful. Consider that success may mean something different to you than it does to others. Enjoying your creativity is key.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). It seems safe to be floating in outer space than to get mixed up in certain relationship turmoil. But don't be fooled. Outer space has its dangers, too, what with the black suns, neutron storms, radiation and the like. Come back to Earth.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You make an action that has no other purpose but to make someone crazy. And to you, this falls under the category of "fun." That's the beautiful thing about you — you're a provocateur. Never change.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You'll learn enough about your fellow man to be glad for your own good fortunes — and your misfortunes, actually. Your complaints about life are so much more appealing and interesting than anyone else's.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Once again, there's proof that intellect is wasted if one isn't also people smart. A concept explored in the first

season of "The Apprentice" applies: There's little correlation between a high IQ and success in lemonade sales.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're ready to go it alone. Then, loved ones surprise you by wanting to be involved in more of your life's activities than you thought would interest them. Chalk it up to the fact that you're just cool.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Though it may seem strategic to play the freshman, eager for his upperclassman's counsel, this doesn't serve your long-term purpose. You already know more than you think you know. Trust that, and dive into your project.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your status in the game isn't determined by a solitary winning move or a single losing move. Taking steps forward and backward is to be expected. Cheer yourself on no matter what, and others will follow suit.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You define your goals and targets, but then, when you get going, it doesn't feel like work. It feels like you're just being really silly. That's how you know you're on the right path.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Whether the sign is optimistic or positive, you put your attention on things for a reason. Regarding your arch nemesis. It's obvious to the rest of the world that you really care for this person, and you may still be too stubborn to admit it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're so over being heavy and serious. Doting on someone who doesn't particularly deserve it — take your pampered pet, for instance — puts you in a lighthearted, frivolous and exceptionally attractive mood.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You actually add hours to your life when you put a seal on one of your time drains. Perhaps stop watching a certain TV show, stop talking to a longed-for person or stop going into that store where the shelves are so long.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



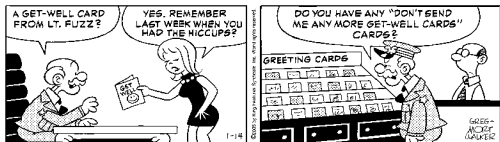
Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



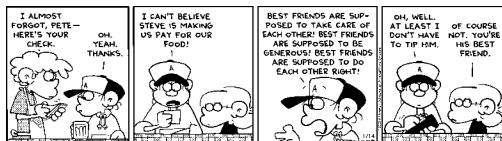
Better or Worse



Peanuts



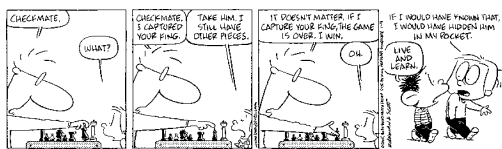
Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



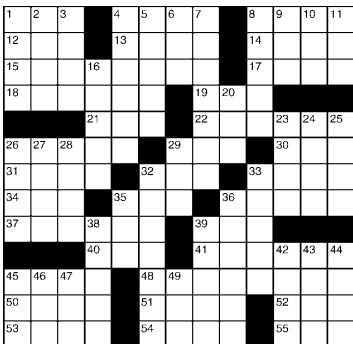
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Simile center
- 4 Dr. McGraw
- 8 Suspend
- 12 Writer Deighton
- 13 Comstock deposit
- 14 Tommie of baseball lore
- 15 Defeat
- 17 Mournful outcry
- 18 Love affairs
- 19 Throw into the mix
- 21 Corridor
- 22 Graffiti artist, perhaps
- 26 Paragon
- 29 Saute
- 30 Wall climber
- 31 Tipperary locale
- 32 Spellbound
- 33 Mideastern gulf
- 34 Nipper's co.
- 35 Candy known for its dispensers
- 36 Decorate
- 37 Go poof
- 39 Will Smith role
- 40 Actress Carrere
- 41 Impale
- 45 Island entertainment
- 48 Forefront
- 50 Milky stone
- 51 Tied
- 52 Choke
- 53 Neat
- 54 The Red and the Black

Down

- 1 Part of T.A.E.
- 2 Line of fashion
- 3 Domini lead-in
- 4 Like geese or mice
- 5 Jack
- 6 Bartenders check them
- 7 English Channel port
- 8 "The Creation" composer
- 9 Way back when
- 10 Fresh
- 11 Mousse alternative
- 16 Beehive bigwig
- 20 Rotation duration
- 23 "Thank You" singer
- 24 Say confidently
- 25 Vanessa's sister
- 26 TV mogul Griffin
- 27 Killer whale
- 28 Anthropologist
- 29 Fossy
- 29 Tasseled topper
- 32 Is obedient
- 33 Farewell
- 35 Omega precursor
- 36 Straights
- 38 Frequent World Cup winner
- 39 Breathlessness?
- 42 Indian music style
- 43 Pull an all-nighter
- 44 Bold and provocative
- 45 Stolen
- 46 AP counterpart
- 47 Terhune poof
- 49 "Hail, Caesar!"

Answer to Previous Puzzle



I-14

CRYPTOQUIP

NJW NXLMWG MS MWKK
JWL ELHWP G X MKKW
XTSBM X PSSNW, TBM MJWP

KWEM JWL JXPUPU.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE THE MATTRESS ON HER GUEST BED IS SO FIRM, IT CREATES LOTS OF HARD FEELINGS.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: J equals H

Agassi might be latest Aussie withdrawal

Hip injury could force American to join growing list of no-shows

BY JOHN PYE

The Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia — Andre Agassi might be forced to join the growing list of high-profile absentees from the Australian Open after injuring his hip in an exhibition tournament.

"It's a mighty big spectrum of possibilities right now," said Agassi, a four-time Australian Open champion, who was trailing Andy Roddick 6-5 in a Kooyong Classic match when he retired Thursday.

Agassi said he felt tightness in the muscle at the front of his right hip and would have an MRI to determine the damage.

"The good news is that it didn't just tear, it was tightening up and that can be your body protecting itself, which is hopefully not the case of the issue," Agassi said. "That wasn't comfortable out there at all, what I'm feeling. I have to wait and see what I'm dealing with — it's a pretty scary feeling out there when something doesn't feel right and is getting worse."

"It's very disappointing and I'll have to do my best to deal with it."

Roddick will face the winner of Friday's semifinal between top-ranked Roger Federer and Tim Henman.

In playoffs for fifth-eight places on Thursday, defending champion David Nalbandian beat fellow Argentine Gaston Gaudio 6-1, 6-3, and Olympic gold medalist Nicolas Pietrangeli defeated Ivan Ljubicic 6-4, 6-4.



Andre Agassi, above, said he felt tightness in the muscle at the front of his right hip, forcing him to leave a match against Andy Roddick late in the first set on Thursday.

While Agassi's attendance in the Australian Open is only in doubt, former Wimbledon and U.S. Open finalist Mark Philippoussis pulled out of it because of an adductor muscle problem that forced him out of the recent Hopman Cup.

The Australian Open women's draw has also been depleted by injuries.

Defending champion Justine Henin-Hardenne pulled out last week because a knee problem and her fellow Belgian Kim Clijsters was ruled out with persistent wrist pain. Jennifer Capriati, a two-time winner, withdrew Wednesday because of a recurring right shoulder injury.

Top-seeded Lindsay Davenport had to forfeit her quarterfinal match against Australia's Samantha Stosur in the Sydney International on Thursday due to bronchitis, 10 days after she withdrew from the Hopman Cup to have her injured knee extra time to heal.

Agassi hasn't ruled himself out.

"I was not counting on this being the end of the day for me," he said. "Maybe in a few days I'll have a much better sense of what my hopes will be."

On Wednesday, the 34-year-old Agassi said he felt he was in top physical condition for the Open and was hoping "to have some magical things happen."

Despite all the conditioning, Agassi said he first felt pain in his hip midway through the first set, and briefly approached the umpire's chair in the 10th game.

"I got to a point where it wasn't doing anybody any good for me to stay out there. It was a difficult decision, but a clear one," Agassi said. "I have been through it before — enough to know that it was only getting worse."



Defending champion Justine Henin-Hardenne, left, Mark Philippoussis, below, Jennifer Capriati and Kim Clijsters will not play in the Australian Open.



Agassi said it was not a recurrence of the hip injury that forced him to miss Wimbledon last year, saying it was a joint rather than a muscle injury.

Agassi won at Kooyong in 2000, 2001 and 2003, and each of those years went on to win the Australian Open. An injury in the annual exhibition event cost him a chance to win three consecutive Australian titles in 2002, when he injured his wrist playing Pete Sampras in the Kooyong final.

That year, he withdrew on the opening day at Melbourne Park.

Wie is just one of the boys this week

BY DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

HONOLULU — Depth on the PGA Tour takes on a new meaning in the Sony Open.

On the far left end of the practice range at Waialae Country Club, 15-year-old Michelle Wie was making a crisp sound with every iron she struck, getting ready for her annual practice round with Ernie Els.

A short time later, 55-year-old Tom Kite arrived and began hitting balls from the same spot. Kite has spent the past five years primarily on the Champions Tour, but wanted to take one more crack at the kids.

A 10th-grade girl wasn't what he had in mind.

"It's amazing how the sport has changed," Kite said.

The tour shifts gears Thursday, going from a winners-only field in the Mercedes Championships to the first full-field event of the year in the Sony Open.

It could have been billed as "Three Old Men and a Little Lady," but that was before 53-year-old Dick Mast earned one of the four spots from Monday qualifying, putting him in the field at Waialae along with fellow Champions Tour players Kite, Craig Slater and Peter Jacobson.

Vijay Singh gives the Sony Open a No. 1 prestige for the first time since the world rankings began in 1986.

Els could give the tournament its first threepeat — champion. The 35-year-old South African has won the past two years in a playoff, over Harrison Frazar last year and Aaron Baddeley in 2003.

The field also includes Retief Goosen, Stewart Cink, Adam Scott and David Toms.

Still, the focus for at least the first two days is on a 15-year-old girl who stands about 6 feet tall, wears hoop earrings and can rip it.

Ryan Palmer played with Wie last week in the Mercedes Championships pro-am and came with this impression.

"If you're not watching her and just listening, it sounds like one of us out here," he said.

Wie has more PGA Tour experience than five men in the field — Justin Bolli, Matt Davidson, Sean O'Hair, Euan Walters and Rob Rashell, all of whom are tour rookies.

Expectations of her are higher.

A year ago, the teen prodigy knocked in a few putts from here to Kauti, shot 68 and missed the cut by one shot. Even so, it was the best score ever by a female competing on a men's tour.

Her goal this year is to play all four rounds, and the ultimate would be a top-20 finish.

Wie already has played about a dozen practice rounds at Waialae, never worse than 75 and twice at 66. Her stroke average at Waialae in the months leading up to the Sony Open is 1 1/2 shots fewer than it was last year.

But she remains realistic.

"People always expect that if you're so close, then you definitely should make the cut this year," she said. "But it has a lot to do with luck and the way you're playing that day. And hopefully, I'll catch a good day."

She had a good day Tuesday, and a long one. Arriving at 7 a.m. to get ready for a practice round with the Big Easy, she later played in the Pro-Junior Golf Challenge with actor Adam Sandler.

Wie didn't leave Waialae until 5:30 p.m., as the sun began to dip over Diamond Head. While some question whether competing against the pros — men or women — is better career training than trying to beat amateurs her own age, Wie made it clear that she is thinking differently from most.

"I never really wanted to be known as winning 50-some-odd tournaments," she said. "I always wanted to be known as someone who did crazy stuff ... stuff that no one ever thought of. I just want to push myself to the limit. I want to be known as people that changed the world, change how people think."

Jim Furyk is looking to change his fortunes after a lost year.

The Sony Open brings back wistful memories of 2004, when Furyk missed half of the season recovering from surgery on his left wrist. It was at Waialae when the pain went from being a little uncomfortable to getting his attention. Despite a remarkably quick recovery, Furyk failed to win on the PGA Tour for the first time in six years.

"I made peace with last year a long time ago," Furyk said. "The most difficult part of last year was toward the end. There was six weeks to go, and I was just starting to get comfortable. There was that sense of urgency. But once October ended, I started looking forward to '05."



Michelle Wie (left), who missed the cut in the Sony Open by one shot last year, played a practice round Tuesday with two-time defending champ Ernie Els (right).

Kite is looking back as much as he is forward.

Qualifying for the U.S. Open last year at Shinnecock Hills reminded him how much he enjoyed spending time on the PGA Tour.

Then he realized he had one more year left on tour, thanks to being in the top 50 in career money.

"If you've ever played in the big leagues, that's where you want to play," he said. "It gets in your blood."

Indy poised to pass a tough test

BY DAVE GOLDBERG
The Associated Press

For a team that's lost five straight times to its Indianapolis opponent, the Colts are getting a lot of respect.

The opponent in question, of course, is New England, which has won two of the past three NFL titles. And the game in question is Sunday in Foxboro, where the Patriots beat the Colts in last season's AFC championship game and again in this season's opener.

Nonetheless, the Patriots are favored by just 2½ points, less than the three points a team normally gets for being at home.

Next to Pittsburgh, the Colts are the NFL's hottest team and MVP Peyton Manning is the NFL's hottest quarterback.

Indy has won nine of 10, the only loss being the final regular-season game in Denver in which it played backups. The Colts took care of that loss at home last week, dispatching the Broncos from the playoffs 49-24 in a game they led 35-3 at halftime.

That season opener, a 27-24 victory by the Patriots, is part of the reason why this game is outside in the cold New England winter.

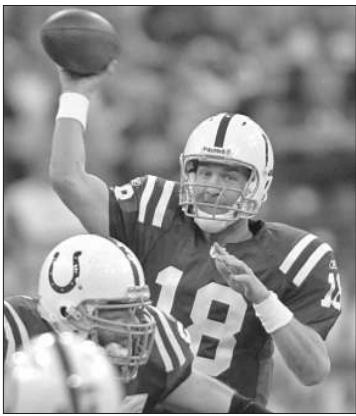
"When we lost that game up there, we felt it would probably cost us a chance to play a home game," said Colts coach Tony Dungy. "That's what we have now."

That clearly should slow down Manning.

Of his record 49 touchdown passes, 32 were indoors — 26 at home and six more at Detroit's Ford Field. In last year's title game, he threw four interceptions and he had another in the opener — picked off in the end zone on Indy's opening drive by Teddy Bruschi.

But he has one potential advantage here.

Ty Law, New England's best cornerback, has finally been declared out for the season, joining



Peyton Manning (18) is eager to make amends for last year's four-interception performance at New England in the AFC championship game.

Tyrone Poole, the other starter on the sideline. No team overcomes injuries better than the Patriots — last year, this year, every year.

But ...
Hot hand.
COLTS, 27-24.
Minnesota (plus 9) at Philadelphia: A lot of Eagles' fans jumped off the bandwagon when Terrell Owens was hurt and more hung their heads when Andy Reid tanked the last two regular-season games, playing subs after his team had clinched home-field advantage in the NFC.

Yes, the Vikings can be dangerous — even with a sore ankle. Randy Moss caught two touchdowns passes last week.

But give Reid the benefit of the doubt. Even without Owens, the Eagles have a healthy Brian Westbrook, whose absence from last year's playoffs deprived Philadelphia of what was then its only game-breaking player. ... **EAGLES, 31-21.**

New York Jets (plus 9) at Pittsburgh: The Jets are better than their reputation, which has been sullied somewhat by the New York media, which decided to ignore the fact that the 5-6 record to finish the regular season was due in large part to Chad Pennington's shoulder injury.

Pennington looked fine last week in New York's overtime win in San Diego — certainly better than he did in a 17-6 loss in Pittsburgh on Dec. 12 when he was playing hurt.

But the Steelers are rested and couldn't even lose when they tried — they won their 14th straight playing subs in Buffalo against a team that would have made the playoffs had it won.

Probably closer to the spread but ... **STEELERS, 24-18.**

St. Louis (plus 7) at Atlanta: The Rams insist they're playing their best now and they seem to be — they beat the Jets at home in the regular-season finale and won in Seattle last week.

They also get the indoor fast track they like at the Georgia Dome, where they lost 34-17 in the second week of the season.

But they are just 3-6 on the road this season. Two of the wins were over the inconsistent Seahawks and the others were against San Francisco, easily the NFL's worst team this season.

And whatever the fast track does for the Rams, it also does a lot for Michael Vick, who ran for 109 yards and was 14 of 19 for 179 yards in the first meeting. ... **FALCONS, 32-24.**

Last week: 2-2 (spread), 1-3 (straight up)

McNabb refers playoff pressure

BY ROB MAADDI
The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Donovan McNabb peeked into the interview room as Brian Westbrook approached the podium, and shouted three questions.

"What are you going to do without T.O.? Are you going to get the ball more? What's the mood of the team?" McNabb said in a squeaky, high-pitched tone, drawing laughter from the crowd.

Tired of hearing those questions himself, the Philadelphia Eagles' five-time Pro Bowl quarterback interjected some humor into a mundane Wednesday news conference. McNabb brings the same lighthearted spirit into the locker room and the huddle.

Pressure? What pressure? McNabb certainly isn't feeling any as the heavily favored Eagles (13-3) prepare to play the Minnesota Vikings (9-8) in an NFC divisional playoff game on Sunday.

With star receiver Terrell Owens sidelined by an ankle injury



"In this world that we live in, you're not great unless you win a Super Bowl," McNabb said. "It's sad that you have to be judged by that, but we just have to play our game and know what we're seeing and go out and execute."

With Owens joining McNabb and Westbrook this season, the offense nearly was unstoppable in the first 12 games. The Eagles won nine of the first dozen games by double-digit margins, including five wins by at least 21 points.

Owens' injury was a devastating blow for Philadelphia, which lost both of its games without the Pro Bowl wideout, mainly because the defense has been rested with nothing on the line.

But the Eagles didn't have Owens, who has an outside chance of playing in the Super Bowl if Philly gets there, when they went to the past three conference title games. McNabb and Westbrook are playing their best, and the defense has been outstanding this season.

"We have more weapons than just T.O.," McNabb said, referring to wideouts Todd Pinkston and Freddie Mitchell and tight ends Chad Lewis and L.J. Smith.

"I know you guys have questions about the receiving corps since T.O. is hurt. Our receiving corps is fine, we'll make plays and we'll win the game."

Westbrook, so valuable that coach Andy Reid sat him out the last two regular-season games, figures to draw most of the attention from Minnesota's defense.

"They still have to respect the other guys on this team," Westbrook said.

Throughout his career, McNabb has earned respect for his leadership skills and the way he has handled adversity, beginning with being booed loudly by Eagles fans when his name was announced as the No. 2 pick of the 1999 NFL Draft.

In 2002, McNabb threw four TD passes on a broken ankle after returning from Arizona, then sat out the last six regular-season games.

He overcame the worst start of his career last season, playing with a sprained right thumb that affected his grip, and an ankle injury limiting his mobility. He was booed by fans, and also dealt with the racially charged critique of then-ESPN commentator Rush Limbaugh, who said McNabb was overrated because the media wants to see a black quarterback succeed.

"There are a lot of outside pressures and guys like Donovan are able to put that aside and concentrate in a city that hasn't celebrated a winner since the 76ers won the NBA title in 1983."

Eagles QB Donovan McNabb said Wednesday, "I love to step out there and everybody is standing on their feet with their mouth wide open to find out what I'm going to do next."

ry, McNabb realizes the burden of carrying the offense falls on him. He welcomes the challenge.

"You guys said T.O. took the pressure off of me. Now I guess I have all the pressure again," McNabb said. "I love pressure. I love to step out there and everybody is standing on their feet with their mouths wide open to find out what I'm going to do next. I can't buckle my seat belts and enjoy the ride."

McNabb is coming off the best season of his six-year career. He set a team record with 3,875 yards passing, became the first NFL player to throw for more than 30 touchdowns (31) and less than 10 interceptions (eight), and his passer rating of 104.7 was second in the NFC.

Often criticized for being inaccurate, McNabb drastically improved his completion percentage — his 64.0 percent was almost six points higher than his career average — and broke an NFL record by completing 24 consecutive passes over two games.

None of the personal injury matters if the Eagles don't win the Super Bowl. After losing the past three NFC championship games, nothing else is considered a success in a city that hasn't celebrated a winner since the 76ers won the NBA title in 1983.

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Estes signs with Diamondbacks

BY RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

Shawn Estes is the newest member of Arizona's revamped rotation, and All-Star catcher Paul Lo Duca plans to stick with the Florida Marlins for a while.

Estes finalized a \$2.5 million, one-year contract with the busy Diamondbacks, who also traded infielder Shea Hillenbrand to the Toronto Blue Jays on Wednesday.

Arizona's moves came one day after the win by the New York Yankees and acquired Shawn Green and Javier Vazquez in separate trades.

Estes turned down a two-year offer for more money from the Washington Nationals. He and his wife, Heather, and their sons, 16-month-old Jackson and 3-month-old Cody, live in Paradise Valley, about a 20-minute drive to Bank One Ballpark.

"I was single for a long time in the big leagues, and playing with guys that had children I saw how hard it was for them to be away," Estes said.

The left-hander becomes the third new starting pitcher on a Diamondbacks roster that has been dramatically overhauled after the team lost 111 games last season. Arizona also signed free agent Russ Ortiz.

The 31-year-old Estes was 15-8 with a 5.84 ERA in a career-high 34 starts for Colorado last season.

"I rededicated myself physically," he said. "I knew I was going to have to prove myself again and kind of reinvent myself."

Hillenbrand, acquired from Boston in May

2003, hit a team-high .310 for the Diamondbacks last season with 15 home runs and 80 RBIs. A third baseman most of his career, he played last season for Arizona.

Lo Duca agreed to an \$18 million, three-year contract with Florida, avoiding salary arbitration. The two-time All-Star was acquired in a trade with the Los Angeles Dodgers last summer.

"It was an easy decision," he said. "Going into this offseason, my mind was set on coming back. It was never an issue."

It was just a matter of getting the X's and O's basically done.

Three other players who were eligible for arbitration agreed to one-year deals: Seattle right-hander Gil Meche (\$2,535,000), Pittsburgh right-hander Brian Meadows (\$1,125,000) and Boston infielder Ramon Vazquez (\$700,000). Ninety-five players remain eligible to file for arbitration by Friday's deadline.

Oakland added a pitcher, agreeing to a \$1 million, one-year contract with Keiichi Yabu. The 36-year-old right-hander played 11 seasons with the Houston Tigers in Japan and went 6-9 with a 3.02 ERA in 19 games last season.

"He's had a lot of success in Japan," Athletics general manager Billy Beane said. "We found with a lot of the recent guys who came over, you can really translate their performance in Japan to the United States. He also had a strong interest in coming to Oakland. He's a four-pitch guy with good command."

Houston agreed to a minor league contract with right-hander Troy Wendell, and Tampa Bay agreed to a minor league deal with left-hander Mark Guthrie.

MLB wants Nationals owner by April

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Major League Baseball still is targeting April for finding an owner for the Washington Nationals, now that the new home of the former Montreal Expos has been determined.

"I would expect that we would start the diligence with the prospective buyers within a week to 10 days," baseball's chief operating officer Bob DuPuy said Wednesday during a break in the owners' meeting. "We've got materials assembled in New York, we'll be inviting groups in, and we'll go from there."

Asked if six to eight prospective ownership groups were expected, DuPuy said, "a little higher than that, and my guess is it will sort itself out over time."

Ownership of the Washington, Oakland and Milwaukee franchises were to be discussed during the two-day session at a north Scottsdale resort.

Owners are scheduled to vote Thursday on the \$223 million sale of the Milwaukee Brewers from the family of commissioner Bud Selig to Mark Attanasio. Some met Wednesday with prospective Oakland Athletics buyer Lewis Wolff.

Baseball's other 29 teams purchased the Expos before the 2002 season, then began a search for a new home for the franchise.

Washington finally was chosen, but that agreement almost fell through before public financing for a new 41,000-seat stadium was approved last month by a 7-6 vote by the District of Columbia Council. The team will play in revamped RFK Stadium while the new ballpark is constructed.

The Nationals open their season April 4 at Pajaro Dunes and play their home opener 10 days later against Arizona.

MLB: BALCO fallout helped push for plan

MLB FROM BACK PAGE

Giambi reportedly told the grand jury he used steroids for about three years and that they had been provided by Bonds' personal trainer, Greg Anderson, who has been indicted in the BALCO case. Bonds testified he used BALCO-supplied substances he believed to be flaxseed oil and arthritic balm but which prosecutors believed were steroids, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. In October, Sports Illustrated had used a cream provided by Anderson and BALCO that he later learned was a steroid. Bonds was then disciplined, and Yankees General Manager Brian Cashman said this week he expected Giambi to report for spring training.

Tony Clark, another senior union leader, said public questions about steroid use had caused players to think about a tougher agreement.

"The integrity of our game was beginning to come under fire, and there are too many great players, past and present, that deserve to be selected for their ability to play this game at a very high level," the free-agent first baseman said in an e-mail. "If a stricter drug policy brings that level of appreciation back, we felt that it was worth pursuing."

Former Nets' player Williams playing for CBATeam

The Associated Press

NAMPA, Idaho — Jayson Williams was so happy to be playing basketball again — and so anxious to avoid offending anyone — that he was as generous with his handshakes, hugs and thank yous as he once was with his comical one-liners.

Hoping to return to the NBA, Williams began his comeback bid Wednesday night by scoring two points and grabbing four rebounds in limited action just hours after signing a contract with the Idaho Stampede of the Continental Basketball Association.

Williams, who faces reckless manslaughter charges related to a 2002 shooting at his New Jersey mansion, has said he hopes to use the CBAs as a springboard for his return to the NBA.

Williams, who turns 37 next month, quit professional basketball in 2000 because of knee problems.

"Interested NBA teams want assurances that I am fully recovered and can withstand the rigors of daily competition," Williams said in a statement Wednesday. "The very competitive CBA will provide me with this opportunity."

The 6-foot-10 forward did not start Wednesday's game against the Yakima Sun Kings, but was the first man off the bench in both halves of Idaho's 117-109 win, playing more than nine minutes.

Sports briefs

He drew a polite cheer from the announced crowd of 2,367 when he first took the floor about midway through the first quarter.

"I felt great. I really appreciated it. I was a little rusty," Williams said after the game. "I'm glad we got a win. These guys look awesome."

Williams appeared to run without problems and was going out of his way to be gracious, at one point profusely thanking a towel girl. He exchanged handshakes and hugs with members of the Sun Kings at halftime after the game, and was the last to leave the autograph table.

Williams was acquitted in April of aggravated manslaughter in the Feb. 14, 2002, shooting death of a limousine driver, Costas "Gus" Christofi. He was convicted on four counts stemming from a failed bid to conceal the shooting.

His retrial on a charge of reckless manslaughter is due to begin in March.

Williams, who called the shooting an accident, won't be sentenced on the four cover-up convictions until the remaining charge is settled. Possible sentences run from probation to about five years in prison. The reckless manslaughter charge

carries a possible 10-year sentence.

Williams played nine seasons for the New Jersey Nets and Philadelphia 76ers. He averaged 10 or more rebounds per game in his final four NBA seasons; his rebounding prowess earned him a trip to the 1998 All-Star game.

Skater Nikodunov's mom killed on way to Nationals

PORTLAND, Ore. — The mother of Angela Nikodunov, a two-time bronze medalist at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, was killed in a car accident Wednesday morning as the family traveled to the competition.

Deborah Nikodunov, 48, of San Pedro, Calif., was pronounced dead at the scene. Angela Nikodunov and her father, Nick, were treated at Legacy Emanuel Hospital and were released. Angela's coach, Igor Pashkevich, is in fair condition at the hospital and was to be kept overnight.

U. Figure Skating announced late Wednesday that Nikodunov had withdrawn from the competition. The women's short program is Thursday night. According to Portland police, Nikodunov and her family were in a shuttle from the airport a little after 9 a.m. when the lime green minivan collided with a Volkswagen Jetta as the van merged onto Interstate 205. The shuttle hit a cement barrier, police said, and the right front tire blew out.

The van flipped onto its side and skidded along the pavement for a short distance before coming to a stop, said Sgt. Brian Schmutz, a spokesman for the Portland police. Deborah Nikodunov was sitting next to a window that exploded, and Schmutz said she died of head trauma.

"It's our understanding it was more of a fluke, just simply because of the victim's position in the vehicle," Schmutz said. "Had the van not rolled or had there been in a slightly different place, the accident may not have killed her."

Bay's Smith to coach U.S. baseball team

DURHAM, N.C. — Baylor coach Steve Smith was chosen baseball coach of the national team that will represent the United States this summer.

Smith, an assistant for the 1998 USA national team, will coach a team of college freshmen and sophomores scheduled to compete in Japan and Taiwan.

"Coach Smith is very highly regarded among his peers, and we're extremely excited to welcome him back as our head coach for the upcoming summer," USA Baseball general manager Eric Campbell said Thursday in a statement. "Steve is an outstanding teacher of the game."

The team is also scheduled to play two three-game series in

Durham against yet to be determined international opponents.

"I look forward to a great summer," Smith said. "Representing the United States in international competition is a privilege."

Smith is 372-234-1 at Baylor. He has led the team to two NCAA baseball titles and the 43rd and final starting position will still be reserved for a current or past NCAA Cup champion.

The system eliminates the old procedure of teams accruing provisions throughout the season to gain entry into the starting fields. If a driver didn't qualify in the top 35 in points, he had to be one of his provisionals to get in.

When the provisionals ran out, the driver was sent home for the week, no matter where he stood in the points standings.

The new qualifying system will not begin until the sixth race of the season. Through the first five races, the 35 in the standings of the 2004 points system will be assured a starting spot.

A&M shows Acie in the hole, upsets Texas

Big 12 win is sophomore Law's first

The Associated Press

Texas A&M wasn't getting any national recognition for its 11-0 start and a close loss to Kansas.

After a 74-63 upset of No. 10 Texas on Wednesday night, it's going to be tough to ignore the Aggies.

"I think we've been ahead of schedule a little bit," said coach Billy Gillispie, who moved over from Texas-El Paso in March.

The Aggies' nonconference wins were over the likes of Prairie

View A&M, Texas-Permian Basin and Trinity, a Division III school.

The 65-60 loss at No.

2 Kansas last week

raised some interest.

The win over Texas that ended an 18-game

Big 12 losing streak opened a lot of eyes.

"It's about having the right guys," Gillispie said, smiling. "It's no magic formula. The story is not about me ... it's about those guys in the white jerseys. The sky's the limit on what you can achieve."

The start is the best at Texas A&M since 1959-60, and no coach in school history has had a better start than Gillispie.

"We know where we are in the landscape of college basketball," he said. "We have 14 more Big 12 games and there's not one that you can circle that you know you're going to win."

Acie Law had 24 points and six assists and freshman Joseph Jones added 13 points and 10 rebounds for the Aggies (12-1, 1-1), who were 7-21 last season and finished last in the Big 12 for the third time in four years.

"He's been doing great," Gillispie said of Law. "Acie was fantastic. He was composed and didn't get out of control and ran our offense."

Before a school-record crowd of 12,811, A&M ended the Longhorns' 10-game winning streak at College Station and improved its record in Reed Arena this season to 12-0.

"It feels real good to get the first Big 12 victory," said Law, a sophomore point guard. "A Top 10 team comes in ... that's a perfect opportunity to show everyone what we can do."

P.J. Tucker led the Longhorns (12-3, 1-1) with 18 points and eight rebounds, and freshman LaMarcus Aldridge added 21 points and eight rebounds.

The Aggies' lead reached 21 points early in the second half.

A&M's aggressive pressure defense — ranked No. 1 nationally in field goal percentage — forced the Longhorns into 20 eases of off-balance passes and threes from way behind the arc.

Texas made one of its first 12 shots and finished 20-for-62 (32 percent). It was the

Longhorns' worst shooting effort of the season.

"They put some pressure on us and were digging back in there," Texas coach Rick Barnes said, "and when that happens, you have to make some shots. We didn't do a particularly great job of that."

No. 1 Illinois 90, Penn St. 64: Luther Head and Dee Brown each made five of the Illini's record 15 three-pointers as they tied the school record with their 17th consecutive victory.

Head had 19 points and Brown added 15 for Illinois (17-0, 3-0 Big Ten), which matched the winning streak of the 1988-89 team, the Illini's last to reach the Final Four.

Geary Claxton had 16 points for the visiting Nittany Lions (6-10, 0-3), who lost their fourth straight.

No. 2 Kansas 71, Iowa St. 66: Wayne Simien returned after a four-game absence and had 13 points, nine rebounds and several big plays in 37 minutes to lead the Jayhawks (12-0, 2-0 Big 12).

The senior forward, a preseason All-America, underwent surgery on his left thumb on Dec. 20. Keith Langford, who suffered a concussion in the final minutes of Sunday's win at Kentucky, had 18 points.

"It feels good having him back because that's the man that helps us out on the boards, scores some points for us, makes the game a lot easier for everybody else," said Langford, who also had five assists.

Curtis Stinson had 18 points for the Cyclones (8-5, 0-2), who lost for just the second time in 27 home games under coach Wayne Morgan.

No. 9 Kentucky 69, Vanderbilt 54: Freshman guard Rajon Rondo scored a career-high 18 points for the Wildcats (11-2, 2-0 Southeastern Conference), who remained perfect in 28 games against Vanderbilt at Rupp Arena, dating to the 1976-77 season.

Corey Smith had 16 points for the Commodores (11-5, 2-1), who had a seven-game winning streak snapped.

Tennessee 64, No. 11 Mississippi St. 63: Scooter McFaddin scored 14 points and the Volunteers (9-6, 2-1 Southeastern Conference) snapped the nation's longest road winning streak at 16 games.

Lawrence Roberts had 22 points and 13 rebounds for the Bulldogs (14-3, 2-1), who had won eight straight overall and hadn't lost on the road since a loss at Tennessee in March 2003.

No. 19 Cincinnati 84, East Carolina 78: Jason Maxwell scored 24 points for the visiting Bearcats (14-1, 3-0 Conference USA),



Texas A&M guard Acie Law IV (14) goes to the basket against Texas forward LaMarcus Aldridge (23) in the second half of the Aggies 74-63 win Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2005.

who have won three straight since losing to top-ranked Illinois.

Corey Rouse had 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Pirates (5-10, 0-3), who fell to 0-7 all-time against Cincinnati.

No. 21 George Washington 85, St. Bonaventure 59: Pops Mensah-Bonsu

scored 14 points to lead six players in double figures for the Colonials (11-2, 3-0 Atlantic 10).

Wade Dunston scored a career-high 25 points for the Bonnies (1-13, 0-3), who are off to the worst start in school history and have lost 25 of their last 27, including all six at home this season.

No. 8 Georgia Tech can't slow down No. 3 North Carolina

By KEITH PARSONS

The Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Rashad McCants enjoys performing for the home crowd.

He gave the North Carolina fans plenty to cheer about Wednesday night, and surprisingly, most of it came on defense.

Known primarily as a scorer, McCants had a career-high four blocks, and Jawad Williams led a home attack with 18 points to help the third-ranked Tar Heels beat No. 8 Georgia Tech 91-69.

McCants, who joined five team-

mates in double figures with 12 points, had three of his rejections in the first half.

"We want to set the tone of the game with our defense," McCants said.

He did that early, leaping high to block Bryant Stinson's shot in the game. Later, with the game all but decided, the 6-foot-4 McCants stuffed a dunk by 6-9 Theodis Tarter, then celebrated by hopping around midcourt.

"I think it was more of just an instinct play," McCants said. "I don't like to let guys score on me, especially going to the goal like that."

Marvin Williams had 14 points and Sean May added 12 for North Carolina (14-1, 3-0 Atlantic Coast Conference), which has won 14 straight since an opening loss to Santa Clara. Point guard Raymond Felton was suspended for the game because he played in a non-sanctioned summer league game, and with him on the court, the Tar Heels have had few challenges.

"I feel like I'm the leader of the team," Felton said. "I feel like I'm the one that gets everybody going. I'm the floor general."

The Yellow Jackets (11-3, 2-1

certainly didn't provide much of a test. Playing without injured guard B.J. Elder for the third straight game, Georgia Tech led only at 1-0, quickly fell behind and never recovered. Jarrett Jack had 24 points and Luke Schenscher finished with 13.

"They're an outstanding team, maybe the best team in the country," Yellow Jackets coach Paul Hewitt said. "But we had some guys not play as well as they're capable of playing. It's one of those things."

With one matchup against a Top 10 opponent out of the way,

North Carolina can turn its attention to Saturday's game at No. 4 Wake Forest. It will be the first meeting ever with both teams in the top five.

"I'm going to enjoy this one," Tar Heels coach Roy Williams said. "Georgia Tech is a big-time freakin' team."

Felton and the other starters had plenty of help from the bench in this one, led by Marvin Williams. In the first half, the Tar Heels' reserves outscored their counterparts 21-0, and it was much the same after the break until both coaches cleared the benches.

Suns run out of gas, losing to leading jazz

The Associated Press

The Phoenix Suns were on the losing end of a game for just the fifth time this season.

After falling behind by 14 points early, the Jazz rallied for their second straight home win over one of the top teams in the Western Conference with a 115-108 victory over Phoenix on Wednesday night.

The loss was the Suns' first since Dec. 28 at San Antonio, ending their run of seven consecutive victories and dropping their NBA-best record to 31-5.

"I don't think we had the same energy," Suns forward Shawn Marion said. "We came out of the gates on fire tonight and I think we just relaxed a little bit. And as soon as we relaxed, they became the aggressors and they started getting all the calls."

Utah's bench and rebounding were down the Suns, who beat Miami 122-107 the previous night. Utah's reserves outscored the Suns' 67-6, and the Jazz won the rebounding battle 55-40.

Mehmet Okur, whose last-second offensive rebound and putback gave Utah a 97-96 win over San Antonio on Monday night, finished with 21 points and 17 rebounds — 10 on the offensive glass.

After losing nine straight, the Jazz have won two in a row over teams with the top two records in the West.

"Those are signs of what we can do and those are signs of the team that we have if we do the right thing," said Raja Bell, who scored 19 points and three rebounds after missing

NBA roundup

ing five games with inflammation in his right knee.

Keith McLeod finished with 10 points and 11 assists, and Matt Harpring had 16 points and eight rebounds for Utah.

Phoenix was able to run at will early, but the Jazz took control in the second quarter and held off everything the Suns had down the stretch.

Amare Stoudemire's two free throws with 3:25 left cut the margin to 110-100, but Utah came right back with a three-pointer by the 7-foot Okur.

"We needed something like this," said Lopez, who had 14 points and four assists after coming off the bench. "We need more wins like these."

Raptors 104, Celtics 93: Morris Peterson made seven three-pointers and scored a career-high 37 points for the Raptors.

Chris Bosh added a career-high 26 points and 10 rebounds for Toronto, 6-6 since trading Vince Carter to New Jersey on Dec 17.

Paul Pierce had 23 points for the Celtics, who have lost seven straight road games.

Wizards 104, Trail Blazers 100: At Washington, Gilbert Arenas made a floating runner with 24 seconds left, then stole an inbound pass and converted it into a breakaway dunk.

The lead changed hands four times in the final 70 seconds, with the Trail Blazers nearly pulling off the win after coming back from a 13-point fourth-quarter defi-

cit. Arenas' floater put the Wizards ahead for good, and his dunk made the score 101-98.

Pistons 90, Hornets 76: At Auburn Hills, Mitch, Ben Wallace had a season-high 19 rebounds and added 11 points to help Detroit snap New Orleans' two-game winning streak.

Chauncey Billups scored 25 points for Detroit, and Richard Hamilton had 20 points and a season-high 10 assists.

Magic 87, Timberwolves 80: Hedo Turkoglu scored 26 points and Grant Hill added 20 to help Orlando snap a seven-game road losing streak.

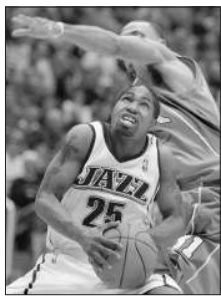
Kevin Garnett matched his career high with 25 rebounds and had 19 points for Minnesota. The Timberwolves have lost three straight and 11 of 15.

Bulls 110, 76ers 78: At Chicago, Ben Gordon matched a career high with 31 points and Eddy Curry added 24 in the surging Bulls' fifth straight victory.

With two five-game winning streaks in the past month, the Bulls have won 11 of their past 14 to move within three games of 500 after losing their first nine games.

Spurs 94, Bucks 79: Tim Duncan scored 21 points, and Tony Parker will add to the lead Spurs to their fourth victory in five games. Michael Redd led visiting Milwaukee with 24 points.

Nuggets 95, Lakers 83: At Denver, Carmelo Anthony had his best shooting night in weeks, scoring 17 points on 7-for-14 shooting to help the Nuggets snap a five-game losing streak.



Jazz guard Keith McLeod (25) slips under the arm of Suns forward Shawn Marion (31) during the fourth quarter.

Clippers 103, SuperSonics 92: At Los Angeles, Corey Maggette had 31 points and 10 rebounds and Darrick Martin made three clutch outside shots in the final 21.

Heat 98, Warriors 91: At Oakland, Shaquille O'Neal had 26 points and 12 rebounds, and Miami avoided its first three-game losing streak of the season.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
New York	17	48	—
Boston	18	46	1 1/2
Philadelphia	15	44	1 1/2
Charlotte	14	39	4 1/2
New Jersey	12	33	4 1/2

Southeast Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Miami	28	17	—
Orlando	15	55	7 1/2
Charlotte	12	58	10 1/2
Atlanta	6	68	19

Central Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Cleveland	12	43	—
Chicago	20	38	1 1/2
Indiana	15	45	6
Milwaukee	16	36	6

Western Conference

Southwest Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
San Antonio	22	38	—
Dallas	21	37	5
Phoenix	18	40	10
Memphis	18	50	10 1/2
New Orleans	4	50	23 1/2

Northwest Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Seattle	25	23	—
Portland	15	41	10
Vancouver	10	42	10 1/2
Golden State	13	34	13 1/2

Pacific Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Phoenix	31	8	—
Los Angeles	28	11	5 1/2
L.A. Lakers	18	15	11 1/2
San Diego	10	30	16 1/2
Golden State	15	26	20

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Atlantic Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Philadelphia at Detroit			
Milwaukee at Memphis			
Orlando at Indiana			
Portland at Dallas			
San Antonio at Houston			
San Antonio at Houston			
Cleveland at Utah			
San Antonio at Sacramento			
L.A. Lakers at Golden State			

Southeast Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Miami	28	17	—
Orlando	15	55	7 1/2
Charlotte	12	58	10 1/2
Atlanta	6	68	19

Central Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Cleveland	12	43	—
Chicago	20	38	1 1/2
Indiana	15	45	6
Milwaukee	16	36	6

Southwest Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
San Antonio	22	38	—
Dallas	21	37	5
Phoenix	18	40	10
Memphis	18	50	10 1/2
New Orleans	4	50	23 1/2

Northwest Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Seattle	25	23	—
Portland	15	41	10
Vancouver	10	42	10 1/2
Golden State	13	34	13 1/2

Pacific Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Phoenix	31	8	—
Los Angeles	28	11	5 1/2
L.A. Lakers	18	15	11 1/2
San Diego	10	30	16 1/2
Golden State	15	26	20

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Midwestern Division			
	W	L	Pct GB
Toronto	14	30	9
Washington	10	30	10
Detroit	9	30	11
Orlando	8	30	12
Philadelphia	7	30	13
San Antonio	9	30	14
Milwaukee	7	30	15
Atlanta	12	30	16
Denver	5	30	17
San Antonio	10	30	18
Golden State	10	30	19

Three-Point Girls—Portland 9-24 (Van Exel 5-10, Stoudamire 3-11, Frahm 1-2, Anderson 0-1), Washington 6-18 (Arenas 4-8, Hayes 1-1, Hughes 1-3, Dixon 0-1, Jeffries 0-1, Jamison 0-4). Fouled out—None. Rebound-

McGrady makes Mavs feel his pain

BY JAIME ARON
The Associated Press

DALLAS — Tracy McGrady's left big toe was bothering him so much that he took off his shoe during the second quarter and limped to the sideline figuring he was done for the night.

The Dallas Mavericks weren't that lucky.

Halftime treatment and good news from an X-ray got McGrady back onto the court, and he decided to push himself. The result was a tremendous third quarter that carried the Houston Rockets to a 124-114 victory Wednesday night that ended the Mavs' six-game winning streak.

"When I went to the bench, I was going to shut it down," McGrady said. "But at halftime, we put ice on it and more padding in my shoe. It wore off a little bit, but I was still in pain."

Houston outscored Dallas 37-24 in the third, with McGrady putting up 13 points and eight assists. He added 10 points in the fourth, finishing with 30 points and 11 assists. The Rockets scored their most points of the season for the second straight game while beating the Mavericks for just the second time in 11 tries.

"I was in one of those zones," said McGrady, who was 6-for-8 on three-pointers, making all three he tried in the third. "When I saw daylight, I was confident I was going to knock the shot down."

The Mavericks had won their past six games by at least 14 points, so this was their first game since before Christmas — and they didn't have enough offense to keep up. That's right, a team that was averaging 114.3 points in its past seven games



The Rockets' Tracy McGrady (1) shouts after hitting a three-pointer in the second half as the Mavericks' Jerry Stackhouse looks on.

couldn't find a consistent score, at least not when it mattered most.

Dirk Nowitzki led the Mavericks with 28 points, but had an 18-minute scoreless drought over the middle two periods. Michael Finley, coming off a season-best 33 points, missed nine of his first 10 shots. He finished with 14 thanks to three baskets long after the outcome was settled.

The Rockets took advantage with an 11-2 run early in the third quarter to go ahead for good, then closed the period up nine. They shot 70 percent in the period, down from 72 in the first, and finished at an impressive 61 percent.

Dallas' top defender, Josh Howard, was out with an upper respiratory infection, and swing-

man Marquis Daniels has been out with an ankle injury. Although Darrell Armstrong went from hardly playing the past few weeks to starting, and there were other changes in the rotation, coach Don Nelson expected a better performance — especially going into a 15-day stretch of nine games against mostly quality foes, starting Friday night in San Antonio.

"I thought our defense let us down a little bit, but I'm not sure that it mattered that much," Nelson said. "They were making every shot. They had a real good rhythm and flow to their game and we didn't."

Houston is suddenly starting to put up the numbers it expected. The Rockets are averaging 104.9 in the past 13 games after putting up just 86.9 in their first 22.

Coaches discuss changes to poll

Some oppose making votes public

BY CHRIS DUNCAN
The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — College football coaches delayed a vote Wednesday on whether to release the ballots for their weekly poll, though some made it clear they strongly oppose the idea.

"I don't see how that could be anything but a negative," Tennessee coach Phillip Fulmer said.

Wyoming coach Joe Glenn said, "I've got no hidden agenda, but you've got nothing good in it."

Just over half of the nation's Division I-A coaches — 59 of 117 — attended the final day of the American Football Coaches Association's annual convention in Louisville.

AFCAC executive director Grant Teaff led a forum on the ESPN/USA Today poll, which came under fire after Texas overtook California for the last at-large bid in the Bowl Championship Series.

Six coaches dropped Cal below No. 6 in the final poll, prompting Pac-10 Commissioner Tom Hansen and Cal coach Jeff Tedford to ask the 61 coaches who voted to discuss their ballots. The AFCAC voted down the request.

On Wednesday, Teaff handed out a three-question survey to the coaches in attendance. The survey asked if the coaches would:

- release their ballots every week,
- release their ballots at the end of the season only;
- and, continue to vote if their ballots were ever publicly released.

Teaff said the rest of the coaches would receive surveys by mail. An official vote would not take place until all the surveys had been received, Teaff said.

"We're trying to make a decision based on what we think is best for our game and our teams and our players," Teaff said.

The AFCAC twice rejected proposals in the past year to publicly disclose the coaches' ballots. Teaff said the more likely change this time was for the coaches to release their ballots at the end of the season.

"I don't think they're interested with dealing with it on a weekly basis," Teaff said. "I don't know why they would be."

Auburn coach Tommy Tuberville

discussed publicly disclosing ballots would put coaches in awkward situations.

"If we release the polls, we're bound to our players," Tuberville said. "They're going to see how we voted, other coaches are going to see. There are a lot of things you don't think about."

Fulmer said revealing how coaches voted could create bad blood before games.

"If we're getting ready to play somebody or if you rank somebody ahead of your team, that's a bad message to your kids," Fulmer said. "It's different than the writers (poll) because we're dealing with our peers. We're playing against them rather than just reporting about them. That's a big difference."

Teaff said a suggestion to delay the coaches poll until October was dismissed. BCS officials have suggested they'd prefer to see pre-season polls eliminated.

"The other issues are more important to us," he said.

Earlier Wednesday, NCAA president Myles Brand participated in what Teaff termed a "sobering" discussion about the academic reforms approved at the NCAA convention earlier this week.

About 30 percent of the Division I programs will receive one-time warnings from the NCAA, stating that if their graduation rates don't rise, they'll lose scholarships.

"There were some questions and clarifications and I hope the coaches now understand what took place at the convention," Brand said.

Also, the coaches agreed to lobby for a fifth year of eligibility for players. Brand said the issue was not discussed at the convention, and will not come up for a vote when the NCAA Division I Management Council meets in April.

However, Brand said the council will vote in April on a proposal to allow teams to play a 12th game every season, beginning in 2006.

Teaff said if the extra game is approved, the fifth year of eligibility becomes vital.

"We have guys [coaches] who will reshirt 20 guys," he said. "When you take 20 guys off of 85 and you go to 12 games, it doesn't mesh. Something has to happen."

LSU gives Miles 7-year deal

The Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — LSU coach Les Miles will receive a seven-year contract worth \$1.25 million annually, a deal similar to the one the Tigers gave Nick Saban when he was first hired.

Upon approval by the LSU Board of Supervisors, Miles' base salary will be \$300,000 a year with an additional \$600,000 for radio, television and internet work, LSU said Wednesday in a

news release.

Miles was hired from Oklahoma State on Jan. 3 to replace Saban, who left LSU to coach the Miami Dolphins.

Saban had the nation's richest contract for a college football coach: a seven-year, \$1.85 million deal he signed after winning a share of the national title for LSU in 2003.

Saban's original LSU contract in 1999 paid him \$1.2 million annually.



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SPORTS



Jazz rally from 14 down
to knock off Suns,
Page 30

MLB cracks down on steroids

Plan includes suspensions for first offenses

BY TIM BROWN
Los Angeles Times

Baseball has hardened its policy against steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs in an agreement reached between the players' union and owners that will be announced Thursday, sources familiar with the negotiations said Wednesday.

The amendment to the Collective Bargaining Agreement will mandate more frequent testing, random off-season testing and suspensions for first-time offenders, baseball sources said.



Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig is expected to announce Thursday that baseball players and owners have reached an agreement on a tougher steroid testing program.

Players' Association chief Don Fehr notified the union's executive board members of the policy changes during a conference

call Wednesday. Owners were briefed during their annual meetings in Scottsdale, Ariz., attended by Commissioner Bud Selig.

"I think it's going to entail more testing, some out-season testing, yes, more in-season random testing and stiffer penalties," said New York Mets pitcher Tom Glavine, a senior member of the union.

In light of growing concerns about steroids because of the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative scandal, and fearing an erosion of the public's trust in the game, Selig had requested a program more closely resembling that held in the minor leagues, which are not protected by the CBA.

The new policy mirrors the minor league principles "in a lot of ways," a source said, particularly in regard to disciplinary measures and monitoring.

Neither Fehr nor baseball negotiator Rob Manfred could be reached for comment.

About the time members of Congress threatened to take action unless baseball reached an agreement on its own — backing Selig in his forceful anti-steroid statements — and shortly after leaked federal grand jury testimony linked Barry Bonds, Jason Giambi and Gary Sheffield to BALCO products, union members authorized Fehr to negotiate an amendment to the 2002 basic agreement.

"Everybody believed that the program we had in place was having an effect and definitely it was doing what it was designed to do," Glavine told the Associated Press, "but having said that, with the stuff that was going on and whatnot, it forced us to take a look at revising it or making it a little tougher. It was not a question anymore if that agreement was going to be enough. It was a question to address some of the new issues that came to light and get our fans to believe we were doing everything we could to make the program go away 100 percent."

SEE MLB ON PAGE 28

Tar Heels sting Georgia Tech



North Carolina's C.J. Hooker, front, and Georgia Tech's Anthony Morrow battle Wednesday at the Dean Smith Center in Chapel Hill, N.C. No. 3 North Carolina defeated No. 8 Georgia Tech 91-69. See story on Page 29.



Colts getting lots
of respect against
nemesis
New England

Page 27



Hip injury could
keep Agassi out
of Australian Open

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